



THE LIBRARY
OF
THE UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

Honoré de Balzac
LA COMÉDIE HUMAINE
VOLUME XXXIV

EDITION DEFINITIVE

OF WHICH THERE ARE PRINTED ON IMPERIAL JAPAN
PAPER ONE THOUSAND COPIES

No. 333

The Human Comedy
SCENES OF
MILITARY AND POLITICAL LIFE
VOLUME II



Supper at the 1871 6/12 1/2



Monoré de Balzac *NOW FOR THE
FIRST TIME COMPLETELY
TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH*
A PASSION IN THE DESERT BY
J. ALFRED BURGAN AN
EPISODE UNDER THE REIGN OF
TERROR A DARK AFFAIR BY
PETER P. BREEN

*WITH EIGHT ETCHINGS BY EUGÈNE DECISY, AFTER
PAINTINGS BY PIERRE VIDAL*

IN ONE VOLUME

PRINTED ONLY FOR SUBSCRIBERS BY
GEORGE BARRIE & SON
PHILADELPHIA

COPYRIGHT, 1898, BY GEORGE BARRIE & SON

College
Library

PQ

2161

B27

V.34

1, S. 8-2-50

A PASSION IN THE DESERT

654926

A PASSION IN THE DESERT

*

"That spectacle is terrifying!" she cried on leaving Monsieur Martin's menagerie.

She had just seen that daring speculator *performing* with his hyena, to use the language of the poster.

"How can he have tamed his animals so completely as to be certain of their affection for—?" she continued.

"What seems to you so problematical," I replied, interrupting her, "is a most natural circumstance."

"Oh!" she exclaimed, while an incredulous smile played on her lips.

"You believe, then, that brute beasts are entirely without passions?" I asked her. "Know, then, that we can teach them all the vices growing out of our civilized condition."

She looked at me in astonishment.

"But," I resumed, "when I saw Monsieur Martin for the first time, I confess that, as in your case, an expression of surprise escaped me. I was then close to an old soldier whose right leg had been amputated, and who came in with me. His face had attracted my attention. His was one of those fearless faces upon which the seal of war and the battles of

Napoléon were imprinted. The old soldier had a remarkably frank and cheerful air which always favorably predisposes me. Doubtless, he was one of those troopers who are surprised at nothing, who find a subject for mirth in the death-struggles of a comrade whom they despoil and bury cheerfully, who parley with the cannon ball resolutely, in short, one of those whose deliberations are brief, and who are on good terms with the devil. Having closely watched the proprietor of the menagerie at the moment of his leaving his dressing-room, my companion curled his lips in a manner that expresses mocking contempt by a kind of significant pout that superior men assume to distinguish themselves from dupes. So, when I expressed myself as to the courage of Monsieur Martin, he smiled, and shaking his head, said to me with the air of an expert:

“‘That is simple!’

“‘How, simple?’ I replied. ‘If you will explain this secret to me, I shall be very much obliged to you.’

“After a few moments, during which we became acquainted, we went to dine at the first restaurant that we saw. At dessert, a bottle of champagne restored the recollections of this strange soldier in all their vividness. He told me his whole history, and I saw that he was justified in exclaiming: *Simple!*”

On returning to her house, she inveigled me, by many enticements and promises, into narrating the confidences of the soldier. The following day, she received this episode of an epic which may well be called *The French in Egypt*.

At the time of the expedition in Upper Egypt, made by General Desaix, a provincial soldier having fallen into the hands of the Maugrabins, was taken by these Arabs into the deserts that lie beyond the cataracts of the Nile. In order to put between them and the French army a distance that would ensure their peace, the Maugrabins made a forced march, and did not halt until night. They pitched their camp around a well that was hidden by palm-trees, near which they had previously buried some provisions. Not dreaming that the idea of escape could enter the mind of their captive, they contented themselves by binding his hands, and they all fell asleep, after having partaken of dates and fed barley to their horses. When the brave Provençal observed that he was secure from the observation of his enemies, he made use of his teeth to obtain possession of a scimitar; then, fixing the blade between his knees, he cut the cords and regained the use of his hands. He found himself free. He seized a carbine and a dagger at once, provided himself with a supply of dry dates, a small sack of barley, and some powder and bullets; buckled on a scimitar, mounted a horse, and spurring it, sharply dashed off in the direction that he supposed would lead him to where the French army must be. Eager to see a bivouac once more, he urged his courser so rapidly, that the poor animal, already fatigued, expired, his flanks torn, leaving the Frenchman in the middle of the desert.

After having walked for some time in the sand

with all the courage of an escaped convict, the soldier was compelled to stop, as the day was declining. Despite the beauty of the heavens at night in the Orient, he had not the strength to pursue his march. He had fortunately been able to reach a height on the crest of which some palm-trees, whose foliage, for a long time visible, had awakened the sweetest hopes in his heart. His weariness was so great, that he stretched himself on a granite rock, whose fantastical outline resembled a camp-bed, and there he slept without taking any precautionary measures to protect himself during his slumber. He had sacrificed his life. His last thought even was a regret. Already he repented having left the Maugrabs, whose nomad life appeared fascinating, now that he was far from them and without succor. He was aroused by the sun, whose pitiless rays, falling perpendicularly on the granite, created an intolerable heat. Now, the Provençal had been stupid enough to place himself opposite to the shadow cast by the green and majestic palm-trees. He looked at these isolated trees and shuddered! They recalled to him the peaceful shafts, crowned with long leaves, that distinguish the Saracen columns of the Cathedral at Arles. But when, after having counted the palm-trees, he cast a look around him, the most frightful despair overwhelmed his soul. He saw a boundless ocean. The dark sand of the desert stretched away in every direction, as far as his eye could penetrate, and sparkled like a steel blade reflecting bright light. He did not know if it were a sea of glass or lakes as

smooth as a mirror. Carried away in waves, a fiery vapor eddied over this moving land. The sky shone in oriental splendor, whose every purity disheartened, as it left nothing that the imagination could desire. Sky and earth were on fire. The wild and terrible majesty of silence terrified. The infinite vastness in every direction weighed on the soul; not a cloud in the heavens, not a breath in the air, not a break on the bosom of the sand stirred by insignificant little waves; in a word, the horizon ended, as at sea in glorious weather, in a line of light as fine as the edge of a sword. The Provençal hugged the trunk of one of the palms, as if it had been the body of a friend; then, sheltered by the elongated and straight shadow thrown on the granite by the trees, he wept, sat down and rested there, contemplating the relentless scene before him with profound sadness. He cried out as if to tempt the solitude. His voice, lost in the hollows of the eminence, pierced the distance with a feeble sound that awoke no echo; the echo was in his heart. The Provençal was twenty-two years old; he cocked his carbine—

“It will always be in good time!” he said to himself as he rested the liberating weapon on the ground.

Looking alternately at the dark and the blue expanse, the soldier dreamed of France. He thought with delight of the gutters of Paris, he recalled the towns through which he had passed, the faces of his comrades, and the minutest incidents of his life. In fact, his Southern imagination

soon evoked glimpses of his loved Provence, which he traced in the waving, heated air that floated over the sheet of desert that stretched out before him. Dreading all the dangers of this cruel mirage, he descended from the eminence by the opposite slope to that by which he had ascended on the previous evening. Great was his joy in perceiving a kind of grotto, formed by nature from the huge blocks of granite which composed the base of the hillock. The débris of a mat disclosed the fact that this retreat had been formerly occupied. He next perceived, at a very short distance, palms laden with dates. Then, the instinct that attaches us to life awoke once more in his heart. He hoped to live long enough to await the passing of some Maugrabins, or perhaps he would soon hear the roar of cannon! for at this time Bonaparte was scouring Egypt. Reanimated by this thought, the Frenchman dragged down some branches of ripe fruit, which, by their weight, appeared to bend the date-trees, and he satisfied himself on tasting this unhopèd-for manna, that the occupant of the grotto had cultivated the palms: the sapid and fresh pulp of the date evinced, in fact, the attention of his predecessor. The Provençal passed, at a bound, from gloomy despair to mad joy. He retraced his steps to the top of the hill, and for the remainder of the day occupied himself in cutting down one of the sterile palms which the night before had served him as a roof. A vague recollection made him think of the animals of the desert, and foreseeing that they

might come to slake their thirst at the spring lost in the sand that appeared at the foot of the granite blocks, he decided to protect himself from the danger of their visits, by erecting a barrier at the entrance of his hermitage. Notwithstanding his zeal, and the strength imparted to him by his fear of being devoured during sleep, he found it impossible to cut the palm in pieces during that day; but he succeeded in felling it. When, towards evening, this king of the desert fell, the noise of its fall reached afar, and the solitude uttered, as it were, a groan; the soldier shuddered as if he had heard a voice that foretold disaster. But like an heir who, for only a brief period, mourns the death of a relative, he stripped this splendid tree of the broad and tall leaves, which are its poetic adornment, and used them to mend the mat, of which he was about to make a bed. Overcome by the heat and by his labors, he fell asleep beneath the ruddy ceiling of his damp grotto. In the dead of night, his sleep was broken by an extraordinary uproar. He raised himself to a sitting posture, and the deep silence that reigned enabled him to recognize the alternating accent of a breathing, whose fierce energy could not belong to a human being. Profound terror, augmented by the darkness, the silence, and the phantasies of his awakening, chilled his heart. He almost felt a painful twitching of his hair when, after straining his pupils, he perceived two faint yellow glimmers that pierced the shadow. At first, he thought these gleams were in some way a

reflection from his own eye-balls; but soon the bright light of the night enabled him gradually to distinguish the objects within the grotto, and he saw a huge beast lying less than two paces from him. Was it a lion, a tiger, or a crocodile? The Provençal was not sufficiently well-informed to know in what species to classify his enemy; but his terror was the more extreme because his ignorance led him to imagine every misfortune to be comprised in one. He suffered the cruel punishment of listening, of marking the peculiarities of this respiration, without losing one, and not daring to permit himself to make the least movement. An odor as strong as that thrown off by foxes, but still more penetrating, heavier, so to speak, filled the grotto; and when the Provençal had scented it, his terror was complete, for he could no longer entertain any doubt as to the existence of the terrible companion, whose royal den he now used as a bivouac. Soon the reflection of the moon, which was hastening to the horizon line, lighted up the lair, and gradually disclosed the resplendent spotted skin of a panther. This lion of Egypt slept, rolled up like a big dog, the peaceful possessor of a sumptuous niche at the entrance to a mansion; its eyes, opened for a moment, were again closed. Its face was turned toward the Frenchman. A thousand vague ideas traversed the mind of the panther's prisoner; at first, he thought of dispatching it with a ball from his carbine, but he saw that the space between him and the animal was too limited to take aim, and that the barrel of his

weapon would reach beyond the beast. Suppose it should wake up?—This supposition rooted him to the spot—Amid the silence he heard his heart beat, and he cursed its too loud pulsations produced by the coursing of his blood, fearing lest he should disturb that sleep which gave him time to devise some safe expedient. He laid his hand twice on the scimitar, thinking he would decapitate his enemy; but the difficulty of cutting through the close, stiff hair compelled him to abandon that daring project.

“To miss him? That would inevitably be death,” he thought.

He preferred the chances of a battle, and resolved to await the day. Daylight was not long in coming. The Frenchman could examine the panther; it had its muzzle dyed with blood.

“It has fed well!”—he thought, without any anxiety as to whether the feast had been of human flesh; it would not be hungry on awakening.

It was a she-panther. The fur of the belly and the thighs was sparkingly white. Several small spots, like velvet, formed pretty bracelets around the paws. The muscular tail was white also, but ended in black rings. The upper part of the coat, which was of the yellow of dull gold, but very glossy and soft, was characteristically spotted and shaded in the form of roses, which serves to distinguish panthers from the other species of the feline race. This quiet but redoubtable hostess snored in an attitude as graceful as that of a cat sleeping on the cushion of an ottoman. Her blood-stained paws,

nervous and well-equipped, were stretched out in front of her; her head, resting thereon, was plentifully supplied with straggling and straight whiskers, resembling silver threads. If the animal had appeared in a cage thus, the Provençal would have admired the grace of the beast, and the striking contrast of the bright colors, which gave her coat an imperial magnificence; but at that moment, he felt that his vision was confused by this sinister sight. The presence of the panther, although she was asleep, produced the same effect upon him as the magnetic eyes of the serpent, it is said, produce on the nightingale. The soldier's courage vanished for a moment in the presence of this danger, although, doubtless, it would have been heightened before the mouth of cannon vomiting shot. Nevertheless, a daring idea penetrated his soul, and dried the spring of cold sweat that trickled down his brow. Acting like men who, pushed to extremes by disaster, arrive at the point of defying death, and opposing themselves to its attacks, he saw, without being able to account for it, a tragedy in this adventure, and resolved to play his part in it with honor, even to the last scene.

"The day before yesterday, the Arabs would perhaps have killed me!"—he said to himself.

Regarding himself, therefore, as dead, he awaited bravely, and with restless curiosity, the waking of his foe. When the sun appeared, the panther suddenly opened her eyes; then violently stretched out her paws, as if to restore the circulation in them

and get rid of the cramp. Finally she yawned, and in so doing, showed the formidable array of her teeth and her pointed tongue, as harsh as a rasp.

"She is like an elegant woman!"—thought the Frenchman, watching her roll and gambol with the most peaceful and coquettish movements.

The panther licked the blood that stained her paws and muzzle, and scratched her head repeatedly with the prettiest of gestures.

"Well!—finish your toilet quickly,"—said the Frenchman to himself, whose gayety returned with his courage; "we shall soon wish each other good-morning."

He then seized the short dagger which he had taken from the Maugrabins.

At that moment the panther turned her head in the direction of the Frenchman, and stared at him without approaching. The fixity of her metallic glance, and the unbearable brightness of her eyes, made the Provençal shudder, especially when the beast moved toward him, but he looked at her with a caressing air, and with a glance as if to magnetize her, he permitted her to come close to him; then, by a movement as gentle and loving as if he desired to fondle the prettiest woman, he passed his hand over her body from head to tail, he scratched the yielding vertebræ which ran along the yellow back of the panther. The beast raised her tail with evident pleasure, her eyes became gentle, and when, for the third time, the Frenchman used this selfish flattery, the panther purred just as cats do to

express their satisfaction; but this murmur came from a throat so strong and deep, that it sounded in the grotto like the last swelling notes of the organ in a church. The Provençal, realizing the importance of his caresses, redoubled them so as to appease and stupefy this imperious courtesan. When he felt convinced that he had overcome the ferocity of his capricious companion,—whose hunger had, happily, been satisfied overnight,—he rose and decided to make his exit from the cave. The panther permitted him to go, but when he had climbed to the crest of the hill, she bounded with the nimbleness and lightness of a sparrow, hopping from branch to branch, and drew close to the soldier, gently rubbing herself against his legs, and rounding her back like a cat; then looking at her guest with a glance that had lost some of its fierceness, she uttered that savage cry that naturalists compare to the noise of a saw.

“She is very exacting!” said the Frenchman to himself, with a smile.

He endeavored to play with the beast’s ears, to stroke her belly, and to scratch her head vigorously with his nails; and perceiving that his manœuvres succeeded, he tickled her skull with the point of his poniard, while watching for the opportunity to kill her; but in discovering the thickness of the bones, he trembled at the thought of his not succeeding.

The sultana of the desert manifested her approval of the ability of her slave by raising her head, stretching out her neck, and acknowledging her

delight by her tranquil attitude. The Frenchman suddenly thought that in order to dispatch this savage princess by a single blow, it would be necessary to plunge his poniard into her throat, and he raised the blade in order to do so, when the panther, doubtless satisfied with the attentions that she had received, gracefully stretched herself at his feet, glancing at him from time to time with an expression which, in spite of its natural ferocity, indistinctly betokened friendliness. The poor Provençal ate his dates, leaning against one of the palms; but he alternately scoured the desert with an anxious eye, in the hope of discovering rescuers, and kept close watch on the uncertain clemency of his terrible companion. The panther watched the spot where the stones of the dates fell, each time that he threw one away, and her eyes then expressed incredible distrust. The animal examined the Frenchman with commercial sagacity; and that the survey proved favorable was evident from the fact that when he had finished his frugal meal, she licked his shoes, and with her rough, muscular tongue, she removed with marvelous skill the dust that had become encrusted in the creases.

“But when she gets hungry?”—the Provençal thought.

Notwithstanding the shudder created by this thought, the soldier, out of curiosity, proceeded to scan the proportions of the panther, which was one of the most magnificent of her species, standing three feet high and measuring four feet long,

exclusive of her tail. This powerful appendage was round like a cudgel, and nearly three feet long. The head of the beast, as big as a lioness's, was remarkable for its cunning expression; the cold-blooded ferocity of a tiger was the prevailing characteristic, but there was, besides, a vague resemblance to the face of a crafty woman. In short, the face of this solitary queen presented, at this moment, a kind of gayety similar to that of a drunken Nero; she had slaked her thirst in blood, and now wished to frolic. The soldier endeavored to move to and fro; the panther gave him full course, satisfied to look after him, in this less resembling a faithful dog than a big Angora cat restlessly watching everything, even the movements of her master. When he turned round, he saw the remains of his horse beside the spring, the panther having dragged the carcass thus far. About two-thirds of it had been devoured. This sight reassured the Frenchman. It was now easy to explain the absence of the panther, and the consideration that she had shown him during his slumber. This first stroke of good luck emboldened him to tempt the future, he conceived the wild hope of keeping on good terms with the beast during the remainder of the day, not neglecting any means of taming her and securing her good graces. He returned near her, and had the unspeakable joy of observing her agitate her tail by an almost insensible movement. Almost fearlessly he then sat down beside the panther, and they commenced playing together. He handled her

Copyrighted 1897 by P. B. S.



Pierre VIDAL



Copyrighted 1897 by B. B. & Co.



paws and her muzzle, and twisted her ears, threw her on her back, and vigorously scratched her warm and silky flank. The beast submitted, and when the soldier endeavored to rub the hair of her paws, she carefully withdrew her curved claws, making them as soft as silk. The Frenchman, who kept one hand on his poniard, still thought of burying the blade into the belly of the over-trustful panther; but he feared lest he should be immediately strangled in her dying convulsions. Moreover, he felt some remorse which appealed to him to spare so inoffensive a creature. It seemed to him that he had found a friend in the boundless desert. Involuntarily his mind reverted to his first mistress, whom he had sarcastically called *Mignonne*, by way of contrast, because of her overmastering jealousy, and whom, during the entire period of their passion, he held in constant dread, because of the knife which she always threatened to use upon him. This recollection of his youthful years led him to make the effort to induce the panther to answer to this name, for he now felt less fear of her and admired her agility, gracefulness and suppleness.

Toward the close of the day, he became accustomed to his perilous position, and he almost liked its sufferings. His companion at length habitually looked at him, when in a falsetto voice he called: *Mignonne!* At sunset, *Mignonne* repeatedly expressed herself in deep and melancholy cries.

"She is well brought up!"—thought the light-hearted soldier; "she says her prayers."

But this mental jest only occurred to him when he had observed the peaceful attitude in which his comrade rested.

"Come, my fair little one, I will let you go to bed first," he said to her, thinking that he would be able to run away more easily when she should be asleep, and that he could reach another lair during the night.

The soldier impatiently awaited the hour when he might flee, and when it arrived, he set out rapidly in the direction of the Nile; but he had hardly traversed a quarter of a league over the sand, when he heard the panther bounding behind him, uttering from time to time those hoarse, saw-like sounds, more terrifying even than the dull thud of her bounding footfall.

"Well," said he to himself, "she has taken a great liking to me!—This young panther has perhaps never met anyone before; it is very flattering to enjoy her first love!"

At this moment, the Frenchman sank into one of those quicksands so dreaded by travelers, from which it is impossible to extricate one's self. Feeling himself a captive, he uttered a cry of alarm; the panther seized him by the collar with her teeth, and with a vigorous leap backward, pulled him from the gulf as if by magic.

"Ah! Mignonne," cried the soldier, caressing her enthusiastically, "we are friends now until death—But no tricks, remember!"

Then he retraced his steps.

From that time the desert seemed to him inhabited. It held a creature to whom the Frenchman could talk, whose wild nature was softened toward him, without his knowing the cause of this extraordinary friendship. However powerful the soldier's desire might be to remain standing and on his guard, he could not resist the power of sleep. On awakening, he could not see Mignonne; he ascended the hillock, and in the distance, he saw her running with the bounding motion peculiar to the animals of her species, who cannot, owing to the extraordinary flexibility of their vertebral column, run like most animals. Mignonne arrived with her lips smeared with gore; she received from her companion the necessary quota of caresses, testifying the while, by repeated purring, to the enjoyment she experienced. Her eyes lacked all ferocity of expression, and were turned upon the Provençal with even more gentleness than on the previous evening, and the latter addressed her as he would a domestic animal:

"Ah! ah! mademoiselle, you are an honest girl, aren't you? Just look at this!—we like to be fondled. Aren't you ashamed? Have you devoured some Maugrabin?—Well, they are only animals like you!—But you are not going to craunch Frenchmen at any rate—I shouldn't love you any longer!"

She gamboled as a young dog plays with its master, allowing herself to be rolled over, slapped and stroked in turns; sometimes she invited the soldier to play by stretching out her paw and touching him.

Some days passed in this way. This companionship enabled the Provençal to admire the sublime grandeur of the desert. Now that he experienced moments of calm and fear, found nourishment, and a creature of whom he thought, his soul was stirred by contrasts.—His life was full of opposing conditions. Solitude revealed all its secrets to him, and wrapped him in all its charms. He saw at sunrise and sunset, glorious effects unknown to the world of habitated places. He trembled on hearing over his head the gentle whistling sound of a bird in flight—rare traveler!—on seeing the clouds blend their misty outlines,—ever-changing, many-tinted travelers. During the night-watches, he studied the moonlight effects on the sea of sand, on which the waves of the simoom rolled in undulating and rapidly changing effects. He lived in the blaze of the oriental day, he marveled at its wonderful magnificence; often, having watched the terrific majesty of a storm on this plain, when the uplifted sands became a red, searching fog, a deadly cloud, with delight he saw the veil of night drawn, for with it came the beneficent freshness of the stars. He heard imaginary music in the heavens. Then the solitude taught him to draw on the treasures of revery. He passed whole hours in recalling trifles, in comparing his past with his present life. Finally he became enamored of his panther, for he felt the need of loving. Whether his will, forcibly exerted, had softened the character of his companion, or, thanks to the battles then waged in the desert, she

found abundant food, certain it is that she respected the life of the Frenchman, who came at length to distrust her no longer in seeing her so tame. He passed the major part of his time in sleeping; but he was obliged to keep watch like a spider in the meshes of his web, so as to lose no chance of effecting his escape, if anyone crossed the limits of his horizon. He had sacrificed his shirt in order to make a flag, which he hoisted at the top of a leafless palm-tree. Prompted by necessity, he devised the plan of keeping it spread, by stretching it on wands, for the wind might fail to wave it at the moment when a hoped-for traveler might scan the desert—

During the weary hours, when he abandoned hope, he amused himself with the panther. He grew at length to recognize the various changes in her tones, the expression of her glances, and he had studied all the shades that played over her golden coat. Mignonne never growled now, even when he seized her by the tuft of her redoubtable tail, in order to count the number of black and white rings which ornamented it so gracefully, and at a distance, shone in the sun like jewels. He found pleasure in studying the fine and soft outlines, the pure whiteness of the soft belly, and the gracefulness of the panther's head. But he was most delighted when she frolicked, and the nimbleness, the youthful gambols of the animal astonished him always; he admired her suppleness when she bounded, crawled, glided, smoothed her fur, clung to him, rolled over and over, crouched, darted about everywhere.

However sudden her bound, however smooth the block of granite on which she gamboled, she stopped suddenly on hearing the word: "Mignonne!"

One day, when the sun was shining most brilliantly, a huge bird hovered in the air. The Provençal left his panther to inspect the new guest, but after a moment's delay, the forsaken sultana growled sullenly.

"Deuce take me! I believe that she is jealous!" exclaimed the soldier, in observing the severe look of the panther. "The soul of Virginia must certainly have passed into that body!—"

The eagle vanished from sight while the soldier was admiring the sleek rump of the panther. How much grace and youthful beauty were embodied in those rounded lines! She was as pretty as a woman. The light fur of her coat insensibly blended by fine gradations of tint with the dead-white that marked the thighs. The intense light of the sun made this living gold and those brown spots sparkle, so as to endow them with indefinable attractions. The Provençal and the panther contemplated each other with looks that indicated their mutual understanding. The coquette quivered when she felt the nails of her friend scratch her skull, her eyes sparkled like stars, then she shut them firmly.

"She has a soul!" he said, while studying the contentment of this queen of the sandy waste, like them, golden, white, solitary and burning—.

"Well!" she said to me, "I have read your plea

in favor of brute beasts; but what was the end of this association between two creatures so well adapted to a mutual understanding?"

"Ah! that is it—It ended as all ardent passions do, in a misunderstanding. It may be supposed that on one side or the other, there was treachery, one from pride never makes an explanation, the other quarrels from obstinacy."

"And sometimes when enjoying the happiest hours," she said, "a look, a word, suffices—"

"Well, go on then, finish your story."

"It is very difficult, but you will understand what the old growler had already confided to me, when, finishing his bottle of champagne, he exclaimed:

" 'I do not know in what way I had hurt her, but she turned round as if she were mad, and with her sharp teeth tore the flesh of my thigh, slightly without doubt. Believing that she intended to devour me, I plunged my dagger into her throat. She rolled over, uttering a cry that froze my blood, and I saw her struggling while watching me without a sign of anger. I would have given the world, my cross that I had not yet received, to restore her to life. It seemed to me that I had slain a human being. The soldiers who caught sight of my flag and ran to my aid found me weeping bitterly—Yes, monsieur,' he continued, after a moment's silence, 'I have fought since then in Germany, Spain, Russia and France; I have moved my carcass about a great deal, I have seen nothing equal to the desert—Ah! that is really beautiful!'

“ ‘What did you feel?’ I asked him.

“ ‘Oh! that cannot be expressed, young man. Besides, I do not always regret my clump of palms and my panther,—I must be in a sad mood for that. In the desert, you see, there is everything and there is nothing—’

“ ‘Go on, explain to me—’

“ ‘Well,’ he replied, with an involuntary gesture of impatience, ‘it is because God is there, but without man.’ ”

Paris, 1832.

END OF SCENES OF MILITARY LIFE.

SCENES OF POLITICAL LIFE
AN EPISODE UNDER THE REIGN OF TERROR

TO MONSIEUR GUYONNET-MERVILLE

Is it not necessary, dear and former patron, to explain to people who are curious to know everything, where I have been able to learn procedure enough to conduct the affairs of my little world, and to perpetuate here the memory of an amiable and intellectual man, who said to Scribe, another amateur student: "Go to the office, I assure you that there is work to do," on meeting him at a ball; but do you need this public testimony to be certain of the affection of the author?

DE BALZAC.

AN EPISODE UNDER THE REIGN OF TERROR

*

In Paris, on the 22d of January, 1793, toward eight o'clock in the evening, an old lady descended the steep eminence which ends at the Church of Saint-Laurent in the Faubourg Saint-Martin. It had snowed so much during the day that footsteps were scarcely heard. The streets were deserted. The fear, quite natural, which the silence inspired, was augmented by the complete terror which, at that time, made France groan; moreover, the old lady had not yet met anyone; her sight, impaired for a long time, did not permit her to perceive in the distance, by the light of the lamps, a few scattered passers-by, moving like shadows in the immense road of this faubourg. She went courageously alone through this solitude, as if her age was a talisman which was to preserve her from all misfortune. When she had passed Rue des Morts, she thought that she distinguished the heavy and firm steps of a man walking behind her. She imagined that she did not hear this noise for the first time; she was frightened at having been followed, and tried to go still more quickly, in order to reach a tolerably well-lighted shop, hoping to be able to verify by the

light the suspicions which seized her. As soon as she saw herself in the line of horizontal light which came from this shop, she suddenly turned her head and caught a glimpse of a human form in the mist; this indistinct object was sufficient for her, she staggered a moment under the weight of terror with which she was overwhelmed, for she no longer doubted that she had been escorted by the stranger from the first step that she had taken outside of her home, and the desire to escape from a spy gave her strength. Incapable of reasoning, she redoubled her steps, as if she could escape from a man, necessarily more agile than herself. After having run for some minutes, she reached the shop of a pastry-cook, entered and fell, rather than sat down, on a chair placed before the counter. At the moment when she made the door-latch creak, a young woman, occupied in embroidering, raised her eyes and recognized, through the glass door, the old-fashioned violet silk mantle, in which the old lady was enveloped, and hastened to open a drawer, as if to get something which she was to return to her. Not only the gesture and the physiognomy of the young woman expressed a desire to get rid of the unknown woman quickly, as if she had been one of those persons whom we do not see with pleasure, but she also permitted an expression of impatience to escape on finding the drawer empty: then, without looking at the lady, she left the counter quickly, went toward the rear of the shop, and called her husband, who at once appeared.

"Where, then, have you put—?" she asked him with an air of mystery, designating the old lady by a glance of the eye, and without finishing her sentence.

Although the pastry-cook could see only the immense cap of black silk, surrounded with bows of violet ribbons, which served as headdress for the unknown lady, he disappeared after having given his wife a look which seemed to say: "Do you think that I am going to leave that on your counter?—" Astonished at the silence and immobility of the old lady, she went to her; and, on seeing her, she was seized with a movement of compassion and perhaps, also, of curiosity. Although the complexion of that woman was naturally livid, like that of a person devoted to secret austerities, it was easy to recognize that a recent emotion spread over it an extraordinary pallor. Her headdress was disposed in such a way as to conceal her hair, without doubt whitened by age, for the cleanliness of the collar of her dress showed that she did not use powder. This want of ornament caused her face to contract a sort of religious severity. Her features were grave and proud. Formerly, the manners and habits of people of quality were so different from those of the people belonging to the other classes, that a noble person was easily recognized. Moreover, the young woman was persuaded that the unknown woman was a *ci-devant*, and that she had belonged to the court.

"Madame—?" said she to her involuntarily

and with respect, forgetting that this title was proscribed.

The old lady did not reply. She held her eyes fixed on the shop-window, as if a frightful object had been outlined there.

"What is the matter with you, citizen," asked the master of the house who, just at that moment, reappeared.

The pastry-cook citizen drew the lady from her revery in extending to her a small paste-board box in blue paper.

"Well, nothing, my friends," replied she, in a gentle voice.

She raised her eyes to the pastry-cook and gave him a look of thanks, but seeing on him a *bonnet rouge*, she involuntarily cried out:

"Ah! you have betrayed me?"—

The young woman and her husband replied by a gesture of horror which made the unknown woman blush, either from having suspected them or from pleasure.

"Excuse me," she then said, with childlike gentleness.

Then drawing out a *louis d'or* from her pocket, she presented it to the pastry-cook.

"Here is the stipulated price," she added.

There is an indigence which the indigent know how to divine. The pastry-cook and his wife exchanged a look, and glanced at the old lady while communicating their mutual thought. This *louis d'or* must be the last. The hands of the lady

trembled in offering this piece, which she contemplated with sorrow and without avarice, but she seemed to know the full extent of the sacrifice. Fasting and misery were engraved on that face in lines as legible as those of fear and of ascetic habits. There were in her garments vestiges of magnificence: she wore a dress of well-worn silk, a mantle, clean although faded, lace carefully mended; in a word, the rags of opulence! The shop-keepers, placed between pity and interest, commenced by solacing their consciences with words—

“But, citizen, you appear very weak—”

“Would madame wish to take something?” said his wife, interrupting the remark of her husband.

“We have some very good soup,” said the pastry-cook.

“It is so cold! madame has, perhaps, been chilled in walking? But you can rest here and warm yourself a little.”

“We are not so black as the devil!” said the pastry-cook.

Won by the kindness which animated the remarks of the charitable shop-keepers, the lady avowed that she had been followed by a stranger, and that she was afraid to return home alone.

“It’s only that?” replied the man with the *bonnet rouge*. “Wait for me, citizen.”

He gave the *louis* to his wife; then moved by that kind of gratefulness which slips into the soul of a dealer when he receives an exorbitant price for merchandise of ordinary value, he went to put on

his uniform of the National Guard, took his chapeau and short sabre, and reappeared under arms; but his wife had had time to reflect. As in many other hearts, reflection closed the open hand of beneficence. Disturbed and fearing to see her husband engaged in some bad affair, the cook's wife endeavored to pull him by the skirt of his coat, in order to stop him; but obeying a sentiment of charity, the brave man at once offered to escort the old lady.

"It appears that the man of whom the citizen is afraid, is still loitering around the shop," said the young woman quickly.

"I fear it," said the lady innocently.

"If he should be a spy?—if there were a conspiracy?—Do not go, and take the box from her—"

These words, whispered in the cook's ear by his wife, froze the impromptu courage of which he was possessed.

"Ah! I am going to say a couple of words to her and rid you of her at once!" exclaimed the cook, opening the door and going out hurriedly.

The old lady, as passive as a child and almost stupefied, reseated herself upon the chair. The honest shop-keeper was not long in reappearing: his face, naturally quite red and still further flushed by the fire of the oven, suddenly became sallow; a fright so great agitated him, that his legs trembled and his eyes resembled those of a drunken man.

"Do you wish to have our heads cut off, miserable aristocrat?—" he exclaimed, furiously. "Think of showing us your heels, never appear here again,

and do not count on me to furnish you any elements of conspiracy!"

On finishing these words, the cook tried to take from the old lady the little box which she had put into one of her pockets. The daring hands of the cook hardly touched her clothing, when the unknown woman, preferring to deliver herself to the dangers of the road without any protector but God, rather than lose that which she had just obtained, recovered the agility of her youth; she sprang toward the door, opened it quickly, and disappeared before the eyes of the wife and the husband, who were astonished and trembling. As soon as the unknown woman found herself outside, she commenced to walk rapidly; but her strength soon failed her, for she heard the spy, by whom she was pitilessly followed, making the snow crunch under the pressure of his heavy step: she was obliged to stop, he stopped. She did not dare to speak to or look at him, either in consequence of the fear which seized her, or through a want of intelligence. She continued her way, going slowly; the man then slackened his pace so that he could remain at a distance which would permit him to watch her. He seemed to be the very shadow of this old lady. Nine o'clock struck, when the silent couple passed before the church of Saint-Laurent. It is in the nature of every soul, even the most infirm, that a period of calmness should succeed a violent agitation, for if the sentiments are infinite, our organs are limited. Moreover, the unknown woman, experiencing no harm from her pretended

persecutor, wished to see in him a hidden friend, anxious to protect her; she brought together all the circumstances which had accompanied every appearance of the stranger, as if to find plausible motives for this consoling opinion, and it pleased her then to recognize in him good rather than bad intentions. Forgetting the fright which this man caused the cook, she advanced then with a firm step into the upper regions of the Faubourg Saint-Martin. After walking for half an hour, she arrived at a house, situated near the junction formed by the principal street of the faubourg and that which leads to the barrier of Pantin. This place is still, to-day, one of the most deserted of all Paris. The north wind, passing over the hills of Chaumont and of Belleville, whistled through the houses, or rather the cottages, scattered in this almost uninhabited valley, where the fencing is composed of walls made of earth and bones. This desolate spot seemed to be the congenial asylum of misery and despair. The man who was unrelenting in the pursuit of the poor creature hardy enough to go through these silent streets by night, appeared struck by the spectacle which met his gaze. He remained pensive, standing in an attitude of hesitation, in the feeble light of a street lamp, whose uncertain glimmering scarcely penetrated the mist. Fear gave eyes to the old lady, who thought she perceived something sinister in the features of the stranger. She felt her terror revive, and profited by the kind of uncertainty that arrested this man, to slip, in the darkness,

toward the door of the solitary house. She touched a spring and disappeared with phantasmagorial rapidity. The unknown man, motionless, contemplated that house, which presented, in some sort, the type of the miserable habitations of this faubourg. This tottering house, built of rubble, was covered with a coat of yellow plaster, so much cracked that people feared to see it fall at the least gust of wind. The roof of brown tiles covered with moss, dipped in several places in such a way as to lead one to think that it was going to give way under the weight of snow. Each story had three windows whose frames, rotted by the humidity and disjointed by the action of the sun, showed that the cold must have penetrated the chambers. This isolated house resembled an old tower which time had forgotten to destroy. A feeble light glimmered in the windows, which irregularly pierced the mansard by which this poor edifice was crowned, while the rest of the house was in complete darkness. The old lady did not ascend without difficulty the rude and common staircase, along which ran a rope which served as banister; she rapped mysteriously at the door of the lodging, which was in the mansard, and immediately threw herself on a chair which an old man offered her.

“Conceal yourself! Conceal yourself!” said she to him. “Although we go out but rarely, our movements are known, our steps are watched—”

“What is there new, then?” asked another old lady who was seated near the fire.

"The man who has been loitering about the house since yesterday, followed me this evening—"

At these words the three inhabitants of this wretched lodging looked at each other, showing on their faces the signs of profound terror. The old man was the least agitated of the three, perhaps because he was in the most danger. Under the weight of a great misfortune or under the yoke of persecution a courageous man commences, so to speak, by making a sacrifice of himself; considers his days as so many victories obtained over fate. The look of the two women, fixed on this old man, showed clearly that he was the sole object of their lively solicitude.

"Why despair of God, my sisters?" said he in a low but reverential tone; "we sang His praises in the midst of the cries which the assassins and the dying uttered in the convent of the Carmelites. If He willed that I should be saved from that butchery it was, without doubt, to reserve me for a destiny which I must accept without a murmur. God protects His own, He can dispose of them at His pleasure. You must think of yourselves and not of me."

"No," said one of the two old women; "what is our life in comparison with that of a priest?"

"Once I saw myself out of the abbey of Chelles, I considered myself as dead," said that one of the two nuns who had remained at home.

"Here," replied she who had arrived, holding out the little box to the priest, "here are the

consecrated wafers. But," exclaimed she, "I hear some one coming up the stairs!"

All three then listened—the noise ceased.

"Do not be frightened," said the priest, "if any one tries to reach you. A person on whose fidelity we can count, must have taken every measure to pass the frontier, and he will come for the letters which I have written to the Duc de Langeais and to the Marquis de Beauséant, in order that they may devise means to take you from this dreadful country, from the death or want which awaits you in it."

"You will not, then, follow us?" gently exclaimed the two nuns, manifesting a sort of despair.

"My place is where there are victims," said the priest with simplicity.

They became silent and looked at their guest with holy admiration.

"Sister Marthe," said he, addressing himself to the nun who had gone for the consecrated wafers, "this messenger is to respond *Fiat voluntas* to the word *Hosanna*."

"There is some one on the stairs!" exclaimed the other nun, opening a hiding-place contrived under the roof. This time it was easy to hear, in the midst of the most profound silence, the steps of a man which resounded on the stairs covered with hardened mud. The priest crept with difficulty into a sort of closet, and the nuns threw some clothes over him.

"You can close it, Sister Agathe," said he in a stifled voice.

The priest was hardly concealed, when three raps at the door made the two holy women shudder, they consulted each other with their eyes without venturing to pronounce a word. They appeared to be sixty years old. Separated from the world for forty years, they were like plants habituated to the air of a hot-house, and which die if taken from it. Accustomed to the life of the convent, they were no longer able to understand any other. One morning their gratings having been broken, they shuddered on finding themselves free. We can easily imagine the kind of artificial imbecility which the events of the Revolution had produced in their innocent souls. Incapable of bringing their claustral ideas into accord with the difficulties of life, and not even understanding their situation, they resembled children of whom one had taken care up to that time, and who, abandoned by maternal providence, prayed instead of crying. Moreover, in the presence of the danger which they foresaw at this moment, they remained mute and passive, not knowing any other defense than Christian resignation. The man who wished to enter, interpreted this silence in his own way, he opened the door and at once showed himself. The two nuns shuddered on recognizing the personage who had for some time been loitering around their house and obtaining information about them. They remained motionless, contemplating him with anxious curiosity, like shy children who silently examine strangers. This man was tall and stout; but nothing in his gait, in

his air, in his physiognomy, indicated a malicious man. He imitated the immobility of the nuns and slowly turned his eyes on the room in which he found himself.

Two mats of straw, laid on the floor, served as beds for the two nuns. A single table was in the middle of the room, on which was placed a brass candlestick, a few plates, three knives and a loaf of bread. A small fire burned in the chimney-place. A few pieces of wood, piled in a corner, attested, moreover, the poverty of the two recluses. The walls, covered with a very old coat of paint, proved the bad condition of the roof, where stains like brown streamlets indicated the infiltration of the rain. A relic, without doubt saved from the pillage of the Abbey of Chelles, ornamented the mantelpiece. Three chairs, two chests and a shabby bureau completed the furniture of this room. A door near the chimney suggested the existence of a second chamber.

The inventory of this cell was soon made by the individual who had introduced himself under such terrible auspices into the bosom of this household. A sentiment of commiseration was pictured upon his face, and he cast a look of kindness on the two women, and was as much embarrassed as they were. The strange silence in which they all three remained did not continue long, for the stranger ended by divining the moral feebleness and inexperience of the two poor creatures and he then said to them in a voice which he tried to soften:

"I do not come here as an enemy, citizens—" he stopped and resumed:

"My sisters, if any misfortune has fallen on you, I assure you that I have not contributed to it—I have a favor to ask of you."

They still continued silent.

"If I intrude upon you, if I annoy you, speak freely, I will retire; but know that I am wholly devoted to you; that if there is any good office that I can render you, you can employ me without fear, and that I alone, perhaps, am above the law, since there is no longer any king—"

There was such an accent of truth in these words, that Sister Agathe, that one of the two nuns who belonged to the House of Langeais, and whose manners seemed to announce that she had formerly known the splendor of fêtes and breathed the air of the court, promptly pointed to a chair, as if to invite their guest to sit down.

The unknown manifested a sort of joy mixed with sadness on understanding this gesture, and before sitting down, waited until the two respectable women were seated.

"You have given asylum," he resumed, "to a venerable priest who has not taken the oath; and who miraculously escaped from the massacres of the Carmelites—"

"Hosanna!—" said Sister Agathe, interrupting the stranger and looking at him with anxious curiosity.

"That is not his name, I believe," he replied.

"But, monsieur," said Sister Marthe earnestly, "we have no priest here and—"

"You should then have more care and foresight," gently replied the stranger, reaching out his hand toward the table and taking from it a breviary. "I do not think that you know Latin and—"

He did not continue, for the extraordinary emotion which pictured itself on the faces of the two poor nuns, made him fear that he had gone too far, they were trembling, and their eyes were filled with tears.

"Do not be alarmed," said he in a frank voice. "I know your names and that of your guest, and for three days I have had a knowledge of your distress and of your devotion to the venerable Abbé de—"

"Hush!" said Sister Agathe, innocently placing a finger on her lips.

"You see, my sisters, that if I had conceived the horrible design of betraying you, I should have been able to accomplish it more than once—"

On hearing these words, the priest released himself from his prison and reappeared in the middle of the room.

"I can not believe, monsieur," said he to the unknown man, "that you are one of our persecutors, and I intrust myself to you. What do you want with me?"

The holy confidence of the priest, the nobility expressed in every feature, would have disarmed assassins. The mysterious personage who had come to animate this scene of misery and resignation,

contemplated for a moment the group formed by these three beings; then he assumed a tone of confidence and addressed the priest in these terms:

"My father, I have come to supplicate you to celebrate a mortuary mass for the repose of the soul—of a—of a consecrated person whose body will never repose in consecrated ground."

The priest shuddered involuntarily. The two nuns, not yet knowing of whom the unknown man wished to speak, stood with outstretched necks and faces turned toward the two speakers in an attitude of curiosity. The ecclesiastic examined the stranger; unequivocal anxiety was pictured on his face, and his looks expressed ardent supplication.

"Well," replied the priest, "return this evening at midnight, and I will be ready to celebrate the only funeral mass which we can offer in expiation of the crime of which you speak."

The unknown trembled, but a satisfaction, at once calm and grave, seemed to triumph over a secret sorrow. After having respectfully bowed to the priest and the two holy women, he disappeared, showing a mute gratitude which was understood by these three generous souls. About two hours after this scene, the unknown man returned, knocking discreetly at the door of the loft and was introduced by Mademoiselle de Beauséant, who led him into the second chamber of this lodging, where everything had been prepared for the ceremony. Between the two flues of the chimney, the two nuns had placed the old bureau, whose antique contours were buried

under a magnificent altar-cloth of green *moire*. A large crucifix of ebony and ivory that was attached to the yellow wall, whose nakedness it served to intensify, necessarily attracted attention. Four small, slender candles, which the sisters had succeeded in fixing on this improvised altar by imbedding them in sealing-wax, gave a pale light, badly reflected by the wall. This feeble light hardly illumined the rest of the room; but in shedding its lustre only on the sacred objects, it resembled a ray of light, fallen from heaven on this bare altar. The floor was damp. In the roof, which on both sides sloped sharply as is usual in garrets, were cracks through which the icy wind blew. Nothing was less pompous and yet nothing, perhaps, was more solemn than this mournful ceremony. A profound silence, which would have permitted one to hear the slightest cry on the route d'Allemagne, spread a sort of sombre majesty over this nocturnal scene. In fact, the grandeur of the action contrasted so strongly with the poverty of the things, that there resulted from it a feeling of religious fright. On each side of the altar, the two aged recluses who were kneeling on the tiled floor, regardless of its deadly dampness, prayed in concert with the priest, who, clothed in his pontifical vestments, was arranging a chalice of gold, ornamented with precious stones, a sacred vessel saved, without doubt, from the pillage of the Abbey of Chelles. Near this ciborium, a monument of royal magnificence, the water and the wine destined for the holy sacrifice

were contained in two glasses scarcely worthy of the poorest tavern. For want of missal, the priest had placed his breviary on a corner of the altar. A common plate was prepared for the washing of the hands, innocent and unstained with blood. All was immense, but small; poor, but noble; at once profane and holy. The unknown man went and piously knelt between the two nuns. But, suddenly, on seeing crape on the chalice and crucifix, for having nothing to indicate the intention of this funeral mass, the priest had put God himself in mourning, he was assailed by a recollection so powerful, that drops of sweat formed on his large brow. The four silent actors of this scene then looked at each other mysteriously; then their souls, reacting on each other, thus communicated their sentiments and were blended in religious commiseration. It seemed that their thought had evoked the martyr whose remains had been devoured by quicklime, and that his ghost was before them in all his royal majesty. They celebrated an *obit* without the body of the deceased. Under these tiles and disjointed laths, four Christians were about to intercede with God for a king of France, and conduct his funeral without a coffin. It was the purest of all devotion, an astonishing act of fidelity, accomplished without reservation. It was without doubt, in the eyes of God, like the glass of water which balances the greatest virtues. The whole monarchy was there in the prayers of a priest and of two poor women; but, perhaps the Revolution was also represented by that man, whose face

betrayed too much remorse not to believe that he was accomplishing the vows of an infinite repentance.

Instead of pronouncing the Latin words: *Introibo ad altare Dei*, etc., by a divine inspiration, the priest looked at the three assistants, who represented Christian France, and said to them in order to efface the misery of that poor lodging:

"We are going to enter into the sanctuary of God!"

At these words, spoken with penetrating unction, a holy fear seized the assistant and the two nuns. Under the vaults of Saint Peter's at Rome, God would not have shown Himself more majestic than He then was in that asylum of indigence, in the eyes of these Christians: so true is it that between man and Him every intermediary seems useless and that He draws His grandeur only from Himself. The fervor of the unknown man was real. Moreover, the sentiment which united the prayers of these four servants of God and of the king, was one and the same. The holy words resounded like celestial music in the midst of the silence. There was a moment when tears overcame the unknown man, it was at the *Pater noster*. The priest added this Latin prayer to it, which was, without doubt, understood by the stranger:

"*Et remitte scelus regicidis sicut Ludovicus eis remisit semetipse!*"—And pardon the regicides as Louis XVI. himself pardoned them!—

The two nuns saw two large tears tracing a moist

line along the manly cheeks of the stranger and falling upon the floor. The Office for the Dead was recited. The *Domine salvum fac regem*, chanted in a low voice, greatly affected these faithful royalists who reflected that the infant king, for whom they were at that moment supplicating the Most High, was a captive in the hands of his enemies. The unknown shuddered on thinking that there might still be a fresh crime, in which he would be, without doubt, forced to participate. When the funeral service was terminated, the priest made a sign to the two nuns, who retired. As soon as he found himself alone with the unknown, he went toward him with a gentle and sorrowful air, then he said to him in a paternal voice:

“My son, if you have steeped your hands in the blood of the martyred king, confide in me. There is not any fault, which in the eyes of God, may not be effaced by a repentance as touching and as sincere as yours appears to be.”

At the first words pronounced by the ecclesiastic, the stranger allowed to escape an involuntary movement of terror; but he resumed a calm demeanor and looked with assurance at the astonished priest.

“Father,” said he, in a voice visibly altered, “no one is more innocent than I of the blood spilled—”

“I must believe you,” said the priest.

He made a pause, during which he again examined his penitent; then, persisting in taking him for one of those timid members of the National Convention, who delivered an inviolable and consecrated head,

Copyrighted 1897, by G. B. & Son



THOMAS AGNEW & SONS

Copyrighted 1897, by G. B. & L. Co.



in order to save their own, he resumed in a grave voice:

"Reflect, my son, that it is not sufficient to be absolved from that great crime, not to have co-operated in it. Those who, being able to defend the king, allowed their swords to remain in their scabbards, will have a heavy account to render before the King of Heaven—. Oh! yes," said the priest, shaking his head from right to left with an expressive movement, "yes, very heavy!—for, in remaining idle, they became the involuntary accomplices of that heinous crime—"

"You believe," asked the astonished stranger, "that an indirect participation will be punished?—The soldier who has been commanded to fall into line, is he, then, culpable?"

The priest remained undecided. Pleased at the embarrassment in which he put this puritan of royalty, by placing him between the dogma of passive obedience which must, according to the partisans of the monarchy, dominate the military codes, and the dogma, quite as important, which consecrates the respect due to the person of kings, the stranger was prompt to see in the hesitation of the priest, a solution favorable to the doubts by which he appeared to be tormented. Then in order not to allow the venerable Jansenist to reflect longer, he said to him:

"I should be ashamed to offer you any compensation for the funeral service which you have just celebrated for the repose of the soul of the king, and

for the ease of my conscience. We can not pay for anything inestimable but by an offering which is priceless. Deign, then, to accept, monsieur, the gift which I make to you of a sacred relic—A day will come, perhaps, when you will comprehend its value.”

On finishing these words, the stranger presented to the ecclesiastic a small and extremely light box; the priest took it involuntarily, so to speak, for the solemnity of the remarks of this man, the tone in which they were spoken, the respect with which he held this box, had plunged him into a profound surprise. They then entered the room in which the two nuns awaited them.

“You are,” the unknown said to them, “in a house, whose proprietor, Mucius Scævola, that plasterer who occupies the second story, is celebrated in the section for his patriotism; but he is secretly attached to the Bourbons. He was formerly huntsman for Monseigneur le Prince de Conti, and he is indebted to him for his fortune. If you do not go out you are in greater security here than in any other place in France. Remain at home. Pious souls will look after your wants, and you can await, without danger, less evil times. In a year on the twenty-first of January,”—in pronouncing these last words, he was not able to conceal an involuntary movement,—“if you adopt this wretched place as an asylum, I will return to celebrate with you the expiatory mass—”

He did not finish. He bowed to the mute

occupants of the loft, cast a last look on the symptoms which bore evidence of their poverty, and disappeared.

For the two innocent nuns, such an adventure had all the interest of a romance; moreover, as soon as the venerable abbé informed them of the mysterious present, so solemnly made by that man, the box was placed by them on the table, and the three anxious faces, feebly lighted up by the candle, betrayed an indescribable curiosity. Mademoiselle de Langeais opened the box, found in it a very fine cambric handkerchief, soiled with sweat; and on unfolding it, they recognized stains on it.

“It is blood!—” said the priest.

“It is stamped with the royal crown!” exclaimed the other sister.

The two sisters let the precious relic fall in horror. For these two artless souls, the mystery in which the stranger enveloped himself became inexplicable; and as to the priest, from that day, he did not even attempt to explain it.

The three prisoners were not long in perceiving, notwithstanding the Terror, that a powerful hand was stretched over them. At first, they received food and provisions; then the two nuns divined that a woman was associated with their protector, when linen and clothing were sent them, which enabled them to go out without being remarked for the aristocratic style of their garments, which they had been obliged to keep; finally, Mucius Scævola gave them two *cartes civiques*. Often advice

necessary to the safety of the priest, reached him in indirect ways; and he conjectured that counsel, so opportunely received, could only be given by a person initiated in the secrets of state. Notwithstanding the famine, which bore heavily on Paris, these proscribed persons found at the door of their poor lodging, rations of *white bread*, which were regularly brought there by invisible hands; nevertheless they thought they recognized in Mucius Scævola the mysterious agent of this beneficence, always as ingenious as it was intelligent. The noble occupants of the loft had no doubt that their protector was the personage who had come to celebrate the expiatory mass on the night of the twenty-second of January, 1793; moreover, he became the object of a particular worship for these three beings, who hoped on and lived only by him. They had added to their prayers, special ones for him; evening and morning, these pious souls made vows for his happiness, for his prosperity, for his safety, and supplicated God to remove from him every snare, to deliver him from his enemies, and to grant him a long and peaceful life. Their gratitude, being, so to speak, renewed every day, was necessarily allied to a sentiment of curiosity which became more lively from day to day. The circumstances which had accompanied the stranger's appearance, were the subject of their conversations; they made a thousand conjectures about him, and the diversion of which he was the subject, was a boon of a new kind for them. They promised

each other not to allow the stranger to escape their kindness on the evening when he would come, according to his promise, to celebrate the sad anniversary of the death of Louis XVI. This night, so impatiently awaited, arrived at last. At midnight, the noise of the stranger's steps resounded on the old, wooden staircase; the chamber had been prepared to receive him, the altar was arranged. This time the sisters opened the door in advance, and both hastened to light up the stairway. Mademoiselle de Langeais even went down a few steps, the sooner to see her benefactor.

"Come," said she to him in an earnest and affectionate voice, "come—they are waiting for you."

The man raised his head, cast a sombre look on the nun, and did not reply; she felt, as it were, an icy cloak falling on her, and remained silent; at his aspect, gratitude and curiosity expired in every heart. To these souls, perhaps he appeared to be colder, more taciturn, and more forbidding than he really was, because the warmth of their sentiments inclined them to demonstrate their friendship. The three poor prisoners, who understood that this man wished to remain a stranger to them, were resigned. The priest thought he remarked a smile on the lips of the unknown, but promptly repressed at the moment when he saw the preparations which had been made to receive him; he heard the mass and prayed; but he disappeared, after having replied in a few words of polite refusal to an invitation which

Mademoiselle de Langeais extended to him, to partake of the little collation which had been prepared.

After the 9 Thermidor, the nuns and the Abbé de Marolles were able to go into Paris without running the least danger. On his first leaving the house the priest went to a perfumery store whose sign was the *Queen of Flowers*, kept by the citizen Ragon and his wife, former perfumers of the court, who remained faithful to the royal family, and through whom the Vendéens corresponded with the princes and royalist committee of Paris. The abbé, dressed as was customary in that epoch, found himself on the door-sill of this shop, situated between Saint-Roch and the Rue des Frondeurs, when a crowd which filled the Rue Saint-Honoré prevented his going out.

"What is it?" said he to Madame Ragon.

"It is nothing," replied she; "it is the cart and the executioner, who are going to Place Louis XV. Ah! we saw him very often last year; but, now, four days after the anniversary of the twenty-first of January, we can look at that horrible procession without sorrow."

"Why?" said the abbé; "what you say is not Christian."

"Ah! It is the execution of the accomplices of Robespierre, they defended themselves as long as they were able; but they are going, in their turn, to the spot where they have sent so many innocent people."

The crowd passed on like a wave. Over the heads, the Abbé de Marolles, yielding to a movement

of curiosity, saw, standing in the cart, that man, who, three days before, had heard his mass.

"Who is it," said he, "that one who—?"

"It is the *bourreau*," replied Monsieur Ragon, calling the high executioner by his monarchical name.

"My dear, my dear," cried Madame Ragon, "the abbé is dying!"

And the old lady took a flagon of vinegar in order to restore the old priest, who had fainted.

"He has, without doubt," he said, "given me the handkerchief with which the king wiped his forehead in going to the martyrdom—Poor man!—The steel blade had a heart when all France lacked one!"

The perfumers believed that the unfortunate priest was delirious.

Paris, January, 1831.

A DARK AFFAIR

TO MONSIEUR DE MARGONNE

His host of the Château of Saché

Gratefully,

DE BALZAC.

I

THE TROUBLES OF THE POLICE

*

The autumn of the year 1803 was one of the most beautiful of the first period of that century which we name the Empire. In October a few rains had refreshed the meadows, the trees were still green and in leaf in the middle of November. Moreover, the people began to imagine that between Heaven and Bonaparte, then declared Consul for life, there was a compact to which this man owed one of his fascinations; and, strange to say! the day on which, in 1812, the sun failed to show its splendor to him, his prosperity ceased. The fifteenth of November of that year, toward four o'clock in the evening, the sun threw, as it were, a red dust over the secular tops of four rows of elms in a long manorial avenue; it made the sand glitter and gave brilliancy to the tufts of grass of one of those immense round-points, which are found in districts where land was formerly cheap enough to be sacrificed to ornament. The air was so pure and the atmosphere so mild that a family was enjoying the refreshing coolness as if in summer. A man clothed in a hunting-jacket of green drill, with green buttons, and in trousers of the same stuff, wearing shoes with thin

soles and gaiters of drill reaching to the knee, was cleaning a carbine with the care which skilful hunters employ in that work during their hours of leisure. That man had neither game-bag nor game, in short, none of the equipment which announces either departure for or return from the chase, and two women, who sat near by, observed him and appeared to be the prey of a badly-disguised terror. Whoever could have contemplated that scene, hidden in the thicket, would, without doubt, have shuddered as did the aged mother-in-law and the wife of that man. Evidently, a hunter does not take such minute precautions to kill small game, and does not use in the Department of the Aube a heavy rifled carbine.

"Do you intend to kill deer, Michu?" said his handsome young wife, trying to assume a cheerful look.

Before replying, Michu eyed his dog, which, crouching in the sun, his paws advanced, on which his nose rested in the charming attitude of hunting dogs, had just raised his head and was alternately scenting ahead in an avenue a quarter of a league long, and toward a cross-road, which extended on the left to the round-point.

"No," replied Michu, "but a monster that I do not intend to miss, a lynx."

The dog, a magnificent white spaniel marked with brown, growled.

"Good," said Michu to himself. "Spies! The country swarms with them."

Madame Michu sorrowfully raised her eyes to Heaven. A handsome blonde, with blue eyes, shaped like an antique statue, pensive and collected, she appeared to be devoured by a hidden and bitter grief. The aspect of the husband could explain to a certain point the terror of the two women. The laws of physiognomy are exact, not only in their application to character, but also in relation to the fatality of existence. There are prophetic physiognomies. Were it possible, and this living statistic is of importance to society, to have an accurate sketch of those who perish on the scaffold, the science of Lavater and that of Gall would invincibly prove that there were in the heads of all these people, even among the innocent, strange signs. Yes, fatality puts its mark on the visages of those who are to die of any violence whatever! Now this seal, visible to the eyes of the observer, was impressed upon the expressive face of the man with the carbine. Short and stout, prompt and rugged, and nimble as a monkey, although of a calm character, Michu had a pale face, injected with blood, short and broad like that of a Calmuck, and to which crisp red hair gave a sinister expression. His eyes, yellowish and clear, showed, like those of a tiger, an interior depth, in which the glance of the person who examined him was lost, without finding any animation or warmth. Fixed, bright and rigid, those eyes finally excited apprehension. The constant contrast of the immobility of the eyes with the activity of the body, contributed, moreover, to the

glacial impression that Michu caused at first sight. Action, prompt in that man, was to serve a single idea; just as with animals, life, without reflection, is at the service of the instinct. From 1793 he had worn his red beard fan-shaped. Although, during the Terror, he had not been president of a club of Jacobins, this peculiarity alone would have given him a formidable aspect. This Socratic face, with flat nose, was crowned with a very handsome forehead, but so protuberant that it appeared to overhang the visage. The well-defined ears possessed a sort of mobility, like those of wild beasts, which are always on the alert. The mouth, half open, a habit quite common to peasants, exposed his teeth, which were as strong and white as almonds, but badly set. Thick and glossy whiskers encircled that face, which was white and purple in places. The hair, cut short in front, long on the cheeks and behind the head, set forth perfectly, by its tawny red, all that was strange and fatal in that physiognomy. The neck, short and thick, tempted the chopping-knife of the law. At this moment, the sun, falling obliquely on this group, lighted up completely these three heads, which the dog eyed at intervals. This scene took place on a magnificent site. This round-point is at the extremity of the park of Gondreville, one of the richest soils in France, and beyond contradiction, one of the most beautiful spots in the Department of the Aube: magnificent avenues of elms, a château constructed after the designs of Mansard, a park of fifteen

hundred acres, inclosed with walls, nine large farms, a forest, mills and meadows. This quasi-royal estate belonged, before the Revolution, to the Simeuse family. Ximeuse is a fief, situated in Lorraine. The name is pronounced Simeuse, which was finally written as it is pronounced.

The large fortune of the Simeuses, noblemen attached to the House of Bourgogne, dates from the time in which the Guises threatened the Valoises. Richelieu at first, then Louis XIV., recollected the devotion of the Simeuses to the factious House of Lorraine and repelled their advances. The Marquis de Simeuse of that day, an old Burgundian, an old Guisard, an old Ligueur, an old Frondeur,—he had inherited the four great enmities of the nobility against royalty,—came to live at Cinq-Cygne. This courtier repelled at the Louvre had married the widow of the Comte de Cinq-Cygne, of the younger branch of the famous family De Chargebœuf, one of the most illustrious of the county of Champagne, but which became as celebrated as and more opulent than, the older branch. The marquis, one of the richest men of his time, instead of ruining himself at court, built Gondreville, united its domains and annexed lands, merely to have a fine hunting-ground. He also constructed at Troyes, the Hôtel Simeuse, a short distance from the Hôtel de Cinq-Cygne. These two old houses and the bishop's palace were, for a long time, the only stone buildings at Troyes. The marquis sold Simeuse to the Duc de Lorraine. His son squandered

the savings and some little of that great fortune during the reign of Louis XV.; but this son became, at first, commander of a squadron, then vice-admiral, and redeemed the follies of his youth by brilliant services. The Marquis de Simeuse, son of this sailor, had perished on the scaffold at Troyes, leaving male twins, who emigrated, and were at this time abroad, following the fortune of the House of Condé.

This round-point was formerly the hunting rendezvous of the Grand Marquis. This title was accorded in the family to the Simeuse who founded Gondreville. From 1789, Michu occupied this rendezvous, situated in the interior of the park, built in the time of Louis XIV., and called the pavilion of Cinq-Cygne. The village of Cinq-Cygne is at the end of the forest of Nodessme—corruption of Notre Dame—to which the avenue with the four rows of elms leads, and in which Couraut discovered the spies. Since the death of the Grand Marquis this pavilion had been completely neglected. The vice-admiral spent much more time at sea and court than at Champagne and his son gave this dilapidated pavilion to Michu for a residence.

This noble building is of brick, ornamented with stone vermicular work at the angles, doors and windows. On each side opens a grating of fine iron-work, but damaged by rust. Next to the grating stretches out a broad and deep ha-ha from which shoot forth vigorous trees and whose parapets bristle with arabesques in iron, which present their innumerable points to malefactors.

The walls of the park begin beyond the circular area produced by the meeting of the cross-roads. On the outside, the magnificent half-moon is outlined by slopes, planted with elms, in the same manner as that which corresponds to it in the park is formed by groups of exotics. Thus the pavilion occupies the centre of the round-point traced by these two horseshoes. Michu had made of the old halls of the ground floor a stable and cattle-sheds, a kitchen and a wood-shed. Of the antique splendor, the only trace is an antechamber flagged with white and black marble, which is entered on the side of the park by one of those door-windows furnished with small panes of glass, some of which were still to be seen at Versailles before Louis Philippe made it the hospital of the glories of France. In the interior, this pavilion is divided by an old wooden, worm-eaten staircase, but full of character, which leads to the second story, on which are five chambers with somewhat low ceilings. Above is an immense loft. This venerable edifice is surmounted with one of those large roofs with four sides, ornamented at the corners, decorated with tufts of foliage in lead and pierced by four of those bull's-eyes to which Mansard was with good reason so partial; for, in France, the attic and the flat Italian roofs are an absurdity, against which the climate protests. Michu kept his forage there. All that part of the park which surrounds this old pavilion is arranged in the English style. At a distance of a hundred paces a former lake, which became simply a poisonous pond, attests

its presence as much by a light fog above the trees as by the cry of a thousand frogs, toads and other amphibious prattlers at sunset. The antiquity of everything, the profound silence of the woods, the perspective of the avenue, the forest in the distance, a thousand details, the ironwork covered with rust, the masses of stone, covered with mossy velvet, all give a poetic charm to that edifice which still exists.

At the moment when this history commences, Michu was leaning on one of the mossy walls, on which he had placed his powder-flask, his cap, handkerchief, a screwdriver, bits of rag, in fine, all the implements necessary to his suspicious work. His wife's chair was beside the outer door of the pavilion, over which were still seen the arms of Simeuse, richly sculptured, with their beautiful device: *Si meurs !* The mother, in peasant garb, had placed her chair before Madame Michu, in order to protect her feet from the dampness by putting them on one of the rounds.

"Is the little one there?" said Michu to his wife.

"He is rambling around the pond; he is wild about frogs and insects," replied the mother.

Michu whistled in such a way as to cause a tremor. The speed at which his son ran showed the despotism exercised by the manager of Gondreville. Michu, since 1789, but especially since 1793, was almost master of this estate. The terror which he inspired in his wife, his mother-in-law and a little domestic, named Gaucher, and in a servant named Marianne, was felt for ten leagues around. It is,

perhaps, not necessary to withhold any longer the reasons for this feeling, which will, moreover, complete the moral portrait of Michu.

The old Marquis de Simeuse disposed of his property in 1790, but, anticipated by events, he had not been able to place in faithful hands his fine estate of Gondreville. Accused of corresponding with the Duc de Brunswick and the Prince de Cobourg, the Marquis de Simeuse and his wife were imprisoned and condemned to death by the Revolutionary Tribunal of Troyes, over which the father of Marthe presided. This beautiful domain was then sold at national sale. At the time of the execution of the marquis and his wife, the people saw there, not without a sort of horror, the general caretaker of the estate of Gondreville, who, having become president of a Jacobin Club at Arcis, came to Troyes to take part in it. The orphan son of a peasant, Michu, loaded with favors by the marquise, who had given him the place of overseer, after having brought him up in the château, was regarded as a Brutus by the enthusiastic; but in the neighborhood, everyone ceased to visit him after this evidence of ingratitude. The purchaser was a man from Arcis, named Marion, grandson of a steward of the House of Simeuse. This man, an advocate before and after the Revolution, was afraid of the overseer and made him his manager and gave him a salary of three thousand francs and an interest in the sales. Michu, who already passed as the possessor of ten thousand francs, married, favored by his renown as

a patriot, the daughter of a tanner of Troyes, the apostle of the Revolution in that city, where he presided over the Revolutionary Tribunal. This tanner, a man of conviction, who in character resembled Saint-Just, was later identified with the conspiracy of Babeuf and committed suicide to escape punishment. Marthe was the most beautiful girl in Troyes. Moreover, and notwithstanding her touching modesty, she had been forced by her dreaded father to assume the rôle of Goddess of Liberty in a republican ceremony. The purchaser did not visit Gondreville three times in seven years. His grandfather had been steward for the Simeuses, all Arcis then believed that the citizen Marion represented the Simeuses. While the Terror lasted, the manager of Gondreville, devoted patriot and son-in-law of the president of the Revolutionary Tribunal of Troyes, favored by Malin—of the Aube—one of the representatives of the department, saw himself the object of a sort of respect. But when La Montagne was vanquished, when his father-in-law had killed himself, Michu became a scapegoat; everyone was eager to attribute to him, as well as to his father-in-law, acts to which he himself was a perfect stranger. The manager resisted the injustice of the populace; he became inflexible and assumed a hostile attitude. His language became defiant. Yet from 18 Brumaire, he observed that profound silence which is the philosophy of courageous people. He no longer struggled against the general opinion, he contented himself by acting; this discreet conduct

was regarded as evidence of craftiness, for he had a fortune of nearly a hundred thousand francs in land. At first, he spent nothing; then this fortune came to him legitimately, both by the inheritance of his father-in-law's estate and the six thousand francs which his place yielded him annually in profits and salary.

Although he was manager for twelve years and everyone was able to estimate his savings, yet at the beginning of the Consulate, when he bought a farm for fifty thousand francs, accusations were brought against the former Montagnard, the people of Arcis attributed to him the intention of recovering consideration by the accumulation of a large fortune. Unfortunately, when this was forgotten by everyone, a foolish affair, aggravated by the idle talk of the country, revived the belief in the ferocity of his character.

One evening, on leaving Troyes in the company of some peasants, among whom was the farmer of Cinq-Cygne, he let a paper fall on the main road; this farmer, who walked behind, stooped and picked it up. Michu turned, saw the paper in the hands of the man and at once drew a pistol from his belt, cocked it and threatened to blow out the brains of the farmer, who knew how to read, if he opened the paper. The action of Michu was so rapid and violent, the tone of his voice so terrible and his eyes so fierce, that everyone was chilled with fear. The farmer of Cinq-Cygne was, of course, Michu's enemy. Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, a cousin of

the Simeuses, had only a farm for her fortune and lived in her *château de Cinq-Cygne*. She lived only for her twin cousins, with whom she played in her infancy at Troyes and Gondreville. Her only brother, Jules de Cinq-Cygne, having emigrated before the Simeuses, died in front of Mayence; but by a rather uncommon privilege, and of which we shall speak, the name of Cinq-Cygne did not perish for want of male heirs. That affair between Michu and the farmer of Cinq-Cygne caused a frightful clamor in the surrounding country and darkened the mysterious shadows which clouded Michu's life; but that circumstance was not the only one which made him dreaded. Some months after that scene, the citizen Marion came to Gondreville with the citizen Malin. The rumor spread that Marion was going to sell the estate to this man, whom political events had well served, and whom the First Consul had placed in the Council of State in order to recompense him for his services on 18 Brumaire. The politicians of the little city of Arcis then conjectured that Marion had been the representative, not of the Simeuses, but of Malin. The all-powerful Councillor of State was the most important personage in Arcis. He had secured for one of his political friends the prefecture of Troyes, he had exempted from the service the son of one of the farmers of Gondreville, called Beauvisage; he served everyone. This affair was not, then, to meet with any opponent in the country, where Malin reigned and where he still reigns. It was the dawn of the Empire.

Those who to-day read histories of the French Revolution, will never know what immense intervals the public mind placed between events of that time, which were so near to each other. The general need of peace and tranquillity, which everyone felt after violent commotions, engendered a complete oblivion of previous occurrences of the gravest character. History, matured by new and pressing interests, quickly grew old. So no one except Michu interested himself in that affair, which was considered quite simple. Marion, who had formerly bought Gondreville for six hundred thousand francs in assignats, sold it for three million francs, but the only money paid by Malin was the registration tax. Grévin, a clerical comrade of Malin, favored, of course, this knavery, and as a recompense was appointed a notary at Arcis by the Councillor of State. When this news reached the pavilion, brought by a tenant of a farm situated between the forest and the park to the left of the beautiful avenue, called Grouage, Michu became pale and started out; he went to watch for Marion and ended by meeting him alone, in an alley of the park.

"You are selling Gondreville?"

"Yes, Michu, yes; you will have a man of great political power for master. The Councillor of State is the friend of the First Consul, he is intimately associated with all the ministers, he will advance your interests."

"You were, then, taking care of the estate for him?"

"I did not say that," replied Marion. "For a time, I did not know how to invest my money, and for my security I have placed it in national lands, but it is not agreeable for me to keep the estate, which belonged to a family in which my father—"

"Was a domestic, a steward," said Michu vehemently. "But you will not sell it; I wish it, and am able to pay you for it, I—"

"You?"

"Yes, I, without jesting, and in good gold, eight hundred thousand francs."

"Eight hundred thousand francs! Where did you get them?" said Marion.

"That does not concern you," responded Michu.

Then becoming mild and speaking in a very low tone, he added:

"My father-in-law has saved many people!"

"You are too late, Michu, the bargain is closed."

"You will break it, monsieur!" exclaimed the manager, at the same time taking his landlord's hand and pressing it as if in a vise. "I am hated, I wish to be rich and powerful; I must have Gondreville. Understand me, I care nothing for my life, and you are going to sell me the estate or I will blow your brains—"

"But I must, at least, have time to withdraw my bargain with Malin, which is not agreeable—"

"I shall give you twenty-four hours. If you say a word about this, I will cut off your head with as little concern as I would cut a radish—"

Marion and Malin left the château during the

night. Marion, who was alarmed, informed the Councillor of State of this meeting and requested him to keep his eye on the manager. It was impossible for Marion to withdraw from the obligation of surrendering this estate to the person who had really paid for it, and Michu did not appear to be a man either to comprehend or admit any such consideration. Moreover, that service rendered by Marion to Malin was to be, and it was, the origin of his own and his brother's political fortune. In 1806, the advocate Marion was appointed chief justice of an imperial court through the influence of Malin, and on the creation of the offices of receivers-general, he procured for the advocate's brother the appointment as receiver-general of the Aube. The Councillor of State requested Marion to live in Paris, and informed the minister of police, who had the overseer placed under surveillance. However, in order not to push him to extremes, and to have him more closely watched, perhaps, Malin retained Michu as manager under the rod of the notary of Arcis. From that time Michu, who became more and more taciturn and thoughtful, had the reputation of a man capable of doing a wicked deed. Malin, Councillor of State—an office which the First Consul made at that time equal to that of minister—and one of the framers of the Code, was playing an important rôle in Paris, where he had purchased one of the finest residences in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, after having married the only daughter of Sibuelle, a rich and rather disreputable contractor, whom he

associated with Marion in the office of receiver-general of the Aube. Moreover, he had not paid more than one visit to Gondreville; he referred to Grévin everything which pertained to his interests. After all, what had he to fear, he, the former representative of the Aube, from a former president of a Jacobin Club at Arcis? Meanwhile, the opinion already so unfavorable to Michu among the lower orders of society, was naturally shared by more prosperous and respectable citizens; and Marion, Grévin, Malin, without giving a motive or compromising themselves, pointed him out as an extremely dangerous man. The authorities, obliged by the minister of the general police to watch Michu, did not destroy this belief. People were finally astonished by the fact that Michu retained his place. But they took this concession as the result of the terror which he inspired. Who will not now comprehend the profound melancholy shown by Michu's wife?

Marthe had been piously trained by her mother. Both were good Catholics and had suffered for the opinions and conduct of the tanner. Marthe never recalled, without blushing, her appearance in the streets of Troyes, arrayed as a goddess. Her father had constrained her to marry Michu, whose bad reputation was increasing, and whom she feared too much ever to be able to judge him. Nevertheless, this woman felt that she was loved; and at the bottom of her heart, the truest affection existed for this terrible man; she had never seen him do any

act of injustice, his expressions were never brutal, to her, at least; in short, he was prompt to anticipate all her desires. This poor pariah, who thought himself disagreeable to his wife, was almost always away from the house. Marthe and Michu, between whom there was a want of confidence, lived on what is to-day called *a war-footing*. Marthe, who saw no one, felt keenly the aversion which for seven years was shown to her as the daughter of an executioner and the wife of a traitor. More than once she had heard the domestics of the farmhouse, called Bellache, situated on the plain to the right of the avenue and tenanted by Beauvisage, a man attached to the Simeuses, say in passing before the pavilion:

“There is the house of the Judases.” The singular resemblance of the manager’s head to that of the thirteenth apostle, and which he had apparently wished to complete, really gave him this odious name throughout the country. Moreover, this misfortune, together with the vague and constant apprehension of the future, rendered Marthe thoughtful and collected. Nothing causes more profound sadness than an unmerited degradation from which it is impossible to free one’s self. Would not a painter have made a beautiful picture of this family of pariahs in the heart of one of the finest sites of Champagne, where the landscape is generally dreary?

“François!” shouted the manager in order to accelerate his son’s pace.

François Michu, a child of ten years, enjoyed the park and forest and levied his small tributes as master; he ate the fruits, hunted, and had neither cares nor troubles. He was the only happy being in that family, isolated in the country by its situation between the park and forest, as it was morally by the general aversion.

The father pointed to the wall, and said to his son: "Gather up and tie together everything there. Look at me! you should love your father and your mother."

The child threw himself on his father to embrace him, but Michu started to remove the carbine and pushed him off.

"Well! you have occasionally prattled about what occurs here," said he, fixing on the child his two formidable eyes, which were as fierce as those of a wildcat. "Remember this well: to reveal the most trifling things that occur here, to Gaucher, to the domestics of Grouage or Bellache, or even to Marianne, who is attached to us, would be to kill your father. Let it not occur again, and I will pardon your former indiscretions."

The child began to cry.

"Don't cry, but to any questions that are asked, answer as the peasants do: 'I don't know.' People whom I do not admire are roaming around the country. Be off! You heard, you two?" said Michu to the women; "let your tongues be dead."

"My dear, what are you going to do?"

Michu, who carefully measured a charge of powder, which he poured into his carbine, placed the

weapon against the wall and said to Marthe: "No one knows that I have that carbine, place yourself before it."

Couraut, standing upon his four paws, barked furiously.

"Beautiful and intelligent beast!" exclaimed Michu, "I am sure that they are spies."

They knew that they were being spied. Couraut and Michu, who appeared to have one and the same soul, lived together as the Arab and his horse live in the desert. The manager knew all the modulations of Couraut's voice and the ideas which they expressed, just as the dog read the thought of his master in his eyes and felt it exhaled into the air from his body.

"What do you think of them?" exclaimed Michu in a whisper, pointing out to his wife two sinister persons who appeared in a side alley and were walking toward the round-point.

"What is taking place in the country? They are Parisians," said the old woman.

"Ah! there!" exclaimed Michu. "Hide my carbine," he whispered to his wife, "they are coming here."

The two Parisians, who crossed the round-point, presented figures which a painter would have considered typical. One, who appeared to be the subordinate, wore topboots hanging slightly down, which displayed lean calves and colored silk stockings of doubtful cleanliness. His knee-breeches, which were of ribbed cloth and plum color, with metal

buttons, were a little too large; the body was at ease in them and the worn creases indicated, by their disposition, a studious man. His quilted vest, covered with showy embroidery, open, buttoned by a single button over the stomach, gave to this personage an air so much the more negligent, as his black hair, in small ringlets, concealed his forehead and fell along his cheeks. Two steel watch-chains hung from his breeches pocket. His shirt was adorned with a pin of white and blue cameo. His cinnamon-colored coat recommended itself to the caricaturist by a long tail, which, seen from behind, had so perfect a resemblance to a codfish, that the name of this fish was given to it. This style of coat lasted ten years, almost as long as the Empire of Napoléon. His loose cravat, with ample and numerous folds, permitted that individual to bury his visage in it up to the nose. His pimpled face, his large, long, brick-colored nose, his prominent cheek-bones, his toothless but menacing and gluttonous mouth, his ears ornamented with large gold earrings, his low forehead, all these details that appear grotesque, were made terrible by two small eyes set and peeping forth like those of hogs and expressing implacable avidity, bantering and quasi sportive cruelty. These two sharp and searching eyes, of a freezing and icy blue, might have been taken for the model of that famous eye, the formidable emblem of the police, which was devised during the Revolution. He wore black silk gloves and carried a cane in his hand. He was without doubt some

official personage, for he had in his bearing, in his manner of taking snuff and thrusting it into the nose, the bureaucratic importance of a subordinate, who is officially ostentatious and who, by virtue of superior orders, is rendered temporarily supreme.

The other, whose costume was in the same style, but elegant and very elegantly worn, finished in the smallest details, whose boots *à la Souvorov*, pulled over close-fitting trousers, creaked when he walked, wore over his coat a spencer, an aristocratic fashion adopted by the *Clichyens* and the gilded youth, and which survived both the *Clichyens* and the gilded youth. At that time there were fashions which lasted longer than parties, a symptom of anarchy which 1830 has already presented to us. This perfect *muscadin* appeared to be thirty years old. His manners savored of refined society; he wore costly jewelry. His shirt collar came up to his ears. His foppish and almost impertinent air betrayed a sort of concealed superiority. His pale, wan face did not seem to contain a drop of blood, his flat and sagacious nose had the sardonic cast of that of a death's head, and his green eyes were impenetrable: their glance was as discreet as his thin and firmly closed mouth was obliged to be. The first appeared to be a good fellow compared with this cold, lean young man, who lashed the air with a Malacca cane, the golden head of which glittered in the sun. The first could, himself, cut off a head, but the second was capable of entangling in the net of

calumny and intrigue, the innocent, the beautiful and the virtuous, of drowning or poisoning them in cold blood. The ruddy man would have consoled his victim with jests. The other would not even have smiled. The first was forty-five years old, and was fond of feasting and admired women. All men of this class have passions which make them slaves of their calling. But the young man was without passions and vices. If he was a spy, he belonged to diplomacy and worked for art alone. He conceived, the other executed; he was the idea, the other, the form.

"Is not this Gondreville, my good woman?" said the young man.

"We do not say here, *my good woman*," replied Michu. "We still have a plain way of calling each other citizen."

"Ah!" said the young man in the most natural way and without appearing displeased. Gamesters have often experienced, in company, especially at the game of écarté, as it were, an interior discomfort at seeing a player sit down before them in the midst of the game, whose manner, voice and way of shuffling the cards predict for them defeat. At the aspect of the young man, Michu felt a prophetic prostration of this kind. He was overcome by a mortal presentiment, he had a confused glimpse of the scaffold; a voice cried out that this *muscadin* would be fatal to him, although they had as yet nothing in common. Moreover, his language had been rude; he wished to be and was offensive.

"Do you not belong to the Councillor of State, Malin?" asked the second Parisian.

"I am my own master," replied Michu.

"After all, ladies," said the young man, assuming the most polished manner, "are we at Gondreville? We are expected there by Monsieur Malin."

"Here is the park," said Michu, pointing out the open grating.

"And why do you conceal that carbine, my pretty girl?" said the jovial companion of the young man, who, in going through the grating, saw the barrel.

"You are always *at work*, even in the country," exclaimed the young man, smiling.

Both returned, seized by a feeling of distrust which the manager understood, notwithstanding the impassibility of their countenances. Marthe allowed them to see the carbine, while Couraut bayed, for she had a conviction that Michu meditated some foul deed, and was almost happy at the perspicacity of the strangers. Michu cast a glance at his wife which made her shudder; he then took the carbine, into which he made it a point to ram a ball, at the same time accepting the fatal chances of this discovery and this meeting. He no longer appeared to care for his life, and his wife then fully comprehended his sinister resolution.

"You then have wolves around here?" said the young man to Michu.

"There are always wolves where there are sheep. You are in Champagne and there is a forest; but we have also the wild boar, we have large and small

animals, we have a little of everything," said Michu, with a bantering air.

"I wager, Corentin," said the elder of the two, after having exchanged a glance with the other, "that this is my Michu—"

"We have not tended hogs together," said the manager.

"No, but we have presided over Jacobins, citizen," said the old cynic, "you at Arcis, I elsewhere. You have retained the politeness of an ultra Jacobin, but it is no longer in vogue, my little fellow."

"The park appears to me to be very large, we might lose ourselves in it; if you are the manager, have us conducted to the château," said Corentin, in a peremptory tone.

Michu whistled for his son and continued to ram the ball. Corentin regarded Marthe with an indifferent eye, while his companion seemed charmed; but he remarked in her traces of anguish, which had escaped the old libertine, whom the carbine had startled. These two natures were perfectly pictured in this trifling yet so important affair.

"I have an appointment on the other side of the park," said the manager, "I cannot render you that service myself, but my son will take you to the château. Which way did you come to Gondreville? Did you reach it by Cinq-Cygne?"

"We, like yourself, had business in the forest," said Corentin, without any apparent irony.

"François," shouted Michu, "conduct these gentlemen to the château through the by-ways, so

that they may not be seen, they do not take the highways. Come here, first!" said he, looking at the two strangers, who had turned their backs and were walking along and talking in a low tone.

Michu seized his child, kissed him almost reverently and with an expression which confirmed the apprehensions of his wife; she was cold in the back and looked at her mother with a dry eye, for she could not weep.

"Go," said he to his son.

And he watched him until he was entirely out of sight. Couraut barked in the direction of the farm of Grouage.

"Oh! it is Violette," he said. "This is the third time he has passed since this morning! What is there then in the air? Enough, Couraut!"

Some moments after, the jog-trot of a horse was heard.

Violette, mounted on one of those small horses which are used by farmers in the environs of Paris, displayed under a round hat with broad brim, his wood-colored and extremely wrinkled face, which appeared still more gloomy than usual. His gray, malicious and bright eyes concealed the treachery of his character. His lean legs, covered with gaiters of white canvas up to the knees, hung down without being supported by stirrups, and seemed held in position by the weight of his heavy, hob-nailed shoes. He wore over his vest of blue cloth, a blouse with black and white stripes. His gray hair fell in ringlets behind his head. This costume, the small gray horse

with slender and short legs, his manner of riding, the projecting stomach, the upper part of the body leaning back, the thick, chapped and earth-colored hand, which held a wretched bridle, worm-eaten and jagged, all pictured in him an avaricious, ambitious peasant, who wishes to own land and buys it at any price. His mouth, with its bluish lips, slit as if a surgeon had opened it with a bistoury, the innumerable wrinkles of his face and forehead obstructed the play of the countenance, whose outlines alone had expression. These hard, fixed lines appeared to express a threat, notwithstanding the humble air, which almost all the peasantry assume, and under which they conceal their emotions and calculations, just as the Orientals and savages cover theirs with an imperturbable gravity. From simple peasant, laboring by the day, having become farmer of Grouage by a system of progressive wickedness, he still continued so after having attained a position which surpassed his first desires. He earnestly wished that misfortune might befall his neighbor. When he was able to contribute to it, he cordially did so. Violette did not disguise his envy, but in all his knavery he remained within the limits of legality, neither more nor less than a parliamentary opposition. He believed that his fortune depended on the ruin of others, and whatever was above him was for him an enemy against whom every means was justifiable. This character is very common among peasants. His present and important business was to obtain from Malin an

extension of the lease of his farm, which had only six years to run. Jealous of the manager's fortune, he watched him closely. The people of the country made war on him for his relations with Michu; but in the hope of extending his lease for twelve years more, the crafty farmer espied an opportunity of doing a service to the government or to Malin, who distrusted Michu. Violette, aided by the private guard of Gondreville, by the rural police and a few hands employed in gathering fagots, kept the commissary of police of Arcis familiar with Michu's most trifling actions. This officer had tried, but ineffectually, to attach Marianne, Michu's servant, to the interests of the government, but Violette and his confidants knew everything through Gaucher, the little domestic on whose fidelity Michu counted, and who betrayed him for trifles, jackets, earrings, cotton-stockings and delicacies. This servant, moreover, did not suspect the importance of his prattle.

Violette blackened every action of Michu's; he made it criminal by the most absurd suppositions, unknown to the manager, who, however, knew the ignoble rôle which the farmer was playing and took pleasure in deceiving him.

"You have, then, a great deal of business at Bellache, as you are still there?" said Michu.

"Still! That is a word of reproach, Monsieur Michu— You do not intend to whistle for the sparrows with such a *clarinette*. I did not know that you had that carbine—"

"It grew on one of my fields, where carbines

grow," responded Michu. "See! there is how I sow them."

The manager aimed at a bugloss thirty paces from him and cut it completely in two.

"Do you keep that bandit's weapon to protect your master? It is probably a gift from him—"

"He came expressly from Paris to bring it to me," responded Michu.

"The fact is, people throughout the country gossip much about his trip; some say he is in disgrace and that he has retired from public life; others, that he wishes to see clearly here. In fact, why does he come without giving notice, absolutely like the First Consul? Did you know he was coming?"

"I do not know him well enough to have his confidence."

"You have, then, not yet seen him?"

"I only knew of his arrival on my return from a round in the park," replied Michu, who reloaded his carbine.

"He has sent to Arcis for Monsieur Grévin; they are going to *tribune* something—"

Malin had been a tribune.

"If you are going in the direction of Cinq-Cygne," said the manager, "take me along, I am going there."

Violette was afraid to take on a man of Michu's strength; he spurred his horse and started off. The Judas shouldered his carbine and darted into the avenue.

"Against whom, then, does Michu bear enmity?" said Marthe to her mother.

Copyrighted 1897 by G. B. & Co.



Copyrighted 1897 by S. B. & L.



"Since he has known of the arrival of Monsieur Malin, he has become very gloomy," she responded. "But it is damp, let us go in."

When they had sat down under the mantel of the chimney, they heard Couraut.

"There is my husband," exclaimed Marthe.

In fact, Michu was going up the stairs; his anxious wife joined him in their chamber.

"See if there is anyone about," said he to Marthe in an agitated voice.

"No one," she replied. "Marianne is in the field with the cow, and Gaucher—"

"Where is Gaucher?" he asked.

"I do not know."

"I am suspicious of that little knave; go up to the loft and search it, look for him in the smallest corners of this pavilion."

Marthe left the chamber and did as directed. When she returned, she found Michu on his knees, praying.

"What is the matter with you?" said she, alarmed.

The manager took his wife by the waist, drew her to him, kissed her on the forehead and replied in an agitated voice:

"If we never see each other again know, my poor wife, that I loved you truly. Follow exactly the instructions written in a letter buried at the foot of the larch-tree in that group," he said to her after a pause and indicating a tree; "it is in a roll of tin. Do not touch it until after my death. In a word,

whatever may happen to me, reflect that notwithstanding the injustice of men, my arm has served the justice of God."

Marthe, who gradually became pale, turned as white as her linen; she looked at her husband with a steady eye, dilated by fright; she wished to speak and found her throat parched.

Michu slipped away like a shadow; he had fastened Couraut to the foot of his bed, and the dog commenced to howl, as dogs howl in despair.

The anger of Michu against Monsieur Marion had been incited by strong motives, but it had fallen on a man much more criminal in his eyes, on Malin, whose secrets were revealed to the manager's eyes, who was in a better position than anyone else to appreciate the conduct of the Councillor of State. Michu's father-in-law had had, politically speaking, the confidence of Malin, who, through Grévin's influence, was the representative of the Aube in the Convention.

*

Perhaps it is not useless to state the circumstances which brought together the Simeuses, the Cinq-Cygnés and Malin, and which influenced the destiny of the twins and of Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, and still more that of Marthe and Michu. At Troyes, the Hôtel Cinq-Cygne faced that of the Simeuses. When the populace, unchained by hands as dexterous as cautious, had pillaged the Hôtel de Simeuse, had discovered the marquis and marquise, accused of corresponding with the enemy, and had delivered them to some members of the National Guard, by whom they were imprisoned, the mob, consistent with itself, shouted: "Now for the Cinq-Cygnés!" It did not conceive that the Cinq-Cygnés might be innocent of the crime of the Simeuses. The worthy and courageous Marquis de Simeuse, in order to save his two sons, eighteen years of age, whom their courage might compromise, had committed them to the care of their aunt, the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne, a little while before the outbreak of the storm. Two servants attached to the Simeuse family, kept them confined. The old man, who did not wish to see his name perish, had requested that in case of extreme disaster, all should be concealed from his two sons. Laurence, at that time twelve years old, was equally loved by the two brothers, and reciprocated their love fully.

Like many twins, the two Simeuses resembled each other so closely that for a long time their mother clothed them in different colors, in order to distinguish them. The first born, the elder, was named Paul-Marie, the other Marie-Paul. Laurence de Cinq-Cygne, to whom had been confided the secret of the situation, played her feminine rôle very well; she entreated her cousins, she coaxed them, and guarded them up to the moment at which the populace surrounded the Hôtel Cinq-Cygne. The two brothers then realized the danger at the same time, and communicated it to each other by the same mutual glance. Their resolution was at once taken, they armed their two servants, and those of the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne, barricaded the door, and after having closed the Venetian shutters, placed themselves at the windows, with five servants and the Abbé d'Hauteserre, a relative of the Cinq-Cygnés. These eight courageous champions opened a terrible fire on that mass of men. Each shot killed or wounded an assailant. Laurence, instead of being distressed, was loading the guns with extraordinary coolness, and passing powder and ball to those out of ammunition. The Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne had fallen upon her knees.

"What are you doing, mother?" said Laurence.

"I am praying," she replied, "both for them and for you."

Sublime expression, which the mother of the Prince of Peace also uttered in Spain under a similar circumstance. In a short time, eleven persons

were killed and mingled on the ground with the wounded. Events of this kind chill or excite the populace, which grows angry in its work or discontinues it. Those in front recoiled, terrified; but the entire mass, which came to kill and rob, at the sight of the dead, began to cry out:

“Assassination! Murder!”

The more sober-minded people went to find the representative of the people. The two brothers, then informed of the calamitous events of the day, suspected that the member of the National Convention intended the ruin of their family, and their suspicion soon became a conviction. Incited by vengeance, they posted themselves under the arch of the courtyard gate and cocked their guns to kill Malin the moment that he showed himself. The countess had lost her head, she saw her house in ashes and her daughter assassinated; she blamed her relatives for the heroic defense, which occupied the attention of France for eight days. Laurence partially opened the gate at the summons made by Malin; on seeing her, the representative relied on his dreaded character, on the helplessness of that child, and entered.

“What! monsieur,” she responded, at the first word he said in demanding the motive of that resistance, “you wish to give liberty to France and you do not protect people in their own houses. They wish to demolish our house, to assassinate us, and should we not have the right to repel force by force?”

Malin was riveted to the spot.

"You, the grandson of a mason employed by the Grand Marquis in the construction of his château," said Marie-Paul, "you, in accepting a calumny, have permitted our father to be dragged to prison!"

"He shall be released," said Malin, who thought he was lost when he saw both the young men moving their guns nervously.

"You owe your life to that promise," said Marie-Paul, solemnly. "But if it be not fulfilled this evening, we shall be able to find you again."

"As to that howling mob," said Laurence, "if you do not disperse it, the first shot will be for you. —Now Monsieur Malin, go!"

The member of the National Convention went out and harangued the multitude, speaking of the sacred right of the fireside, of the *habeas corpus* and of English domicile. He said that the law and the people were sovereign, that the law was the people, that the people must proceed by the law only, and that force should be left to the law. The law of necessity made him eloquent, he dispersed the mob. But he never forgot the expression of contempt of the two brothers or the "Go!" of Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne. Moreover, when the question arose of selling at national sale the property of the Comte de Cinq-Cygne, brother of Laurence, its partition was strictly arranged. The agents of the district left to Laurence only the château, the park, the gardens, and the farm called Cinq-Cygne. In conformity with Malin's instructions, Laurence could claim only her lawful

share, the nation standing in the place of the *émigré*, especially when he was bearing arms against the Republic. In the evening, after that furious tempest, Laurence, fearing some treachery and the snares of the representative, entreated her two cousins so earnestly to leave the country that they mounted their horses and gained the outposts of the Prussian army. At the moment when the two brothers reached the forest of Gondreville, the Hôtel Cinq-Cygne was surrounded; the representative came himself, and in force, to arrest the heirs of the family of Simeuse. He did not venture to lay hold of the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne, then confined to her bed, suffering with a horrible nervous fever, nor of Laurence, a child of twelve years. The domestics, fearing the rigor of the Republic, had disappeared. The following morning it was rumored that the news of the resistance of the two brothers and their flight into Prussia was known to the surrounding country; a mob of three thousand persons assembled before the Hôtel Cinq-Cygne, which was demolished with inexplicable rapidity. Madame de Cinq-Cygne, who was carried to the Hôtel Simeuse, died there in a paroxysm of fever. It was only after these events that Michu appeared on the political stage, for the marquis and marchioness remained about five months in prison. During that time, the representative of the Aube had a mission. But when Monsieur Marion sold Gondreville to Malin, when the whole country had forgotten the effects of the popular

effervescence, Michu then completely understood Malin; at least Michu thought he understood him: for Malin, like Fouché, is one of those personages who have so many aspects, and so much depth under each aspect, that they are impenetrable at the moment of play, and can only be understood a long time after the game is over.

In the important circumstances of his life, Malin never failed to consult his faithful friend Grévin, the notary of Arcis, whose judgment of men and things was, at a distance, keen, clear and precise. This habit is sagacity and constitutes the strength of secondary men. Now, in November, 1803, the conjunction of affairs was so grave for the Councilor of State, that a letter would have compromised the two friends. Malin, who was to be named senator, feared to explain himself in Paris; he left his residence and repaired to Gondreville, giving to the First Consul only one of the reasons which made it desirable for him to be there, and which imparted to him an appearance of zeal in the eyes of Bonaparte, when, in fact, he was acting exclusively in his own interest and not in that of the state. Now, while Michu watched and waited in the park, like the savage, for a propitious moment for his vengeance, the politic Malin, accustomed to turn circumstances to his own account, led his friend to a small meadow of the English garden, a deserted locality and favorable to a mysterious conference. Thus, standing in the middle of the meadow and speaking in a low tone, the two friends were at too

great a distance to be heard, were anyone concealed in order to listen, and they could change the conversation if any intruder should arrive.

"Why not have remained in a chamber of the château?" said Grévin.

"Have you not seen the two men whom the prefect of police sends me?"

Although Fouché was, in the affair of the conspiracy of Pichegru, Georges, Moreau and Polignac, the soul of the consular cabinet, he did not direct the ministry of police, and was then, like Malin, simply a Councillor of State.

"These two men are the two arms of Fouché. One, that young *muscadin*, whose face resembles a decanter of lemonade, who has vinegar on his lips and verjuice in his eyes, put an end to the insurrection in the west, in the year VII., in the space of fifteen days. The other is the child of Lenoir, he is the only one who retains the grand traditions of the police. I had asked for an agent of no consequence, supported by an official personage, and they sent me those two adroit fellows. Ah! Grévin, Fouché, without doubt, intends to see through my game. That is why I have left those gentlemen dining at the château; let them examine everything, they will find there neither Louis XVIII. nor the least clew."

"Ah! indeed! but what game are you playing, then?"

"Ah! my friend, a double game is very dangerous; but with regard to Fouché it is triple, and he

has had a suspicion that I am in the secrets of the House of Bourbon."

"You!"

"I," responded Malin.

"You do not, then, remember Favras?"

The remark made an impression on the Councillor.

"And since when?" asked Grévin, after a pause.

"Since the consulship for life."

"But are there no proofs?"

"Not that!" said Malin, snapping his thumb-nail against his teeth.

In a few words Malin sketched clearly the critical position in which Bonaparte was putting England, menaced with destruction by the camp of Boulogne; explaining to Grévin the extent, unknown to France and Europe, but which Pitt suspected, of that projected descent; then the critical position in which England was going to place Bonaparte. An imposing coalition, Prussia, Austria and Russia, subsidized with English gold, was to arm seven hundred thousand men. At the same time, a formidable conspiracy was stretching out its network in the interior, and was reuniting the Montagnards, the Chouans, the Royalists and their princes.

"So long as Louis XVIII. saw three Consuls, he believed that anarchy still existed, and that under the cover of some tumult, he might avenge the 13 Vendémiaire and the 18 Fructidor," said Malin; "but the consulship for life unmasked Bonaparte's designs, he will soon be Emperor. This former sub-lieutenant contemplated the creation of a

dynasty! now they intend, this time, to take his life, and the plot is more ably arranged than that of the Rue Saint-Nicaise. Pichegru, Georges, Moreau, the Duc d'Enghien, Polignac and Rivière, the two friends of the Comte d'Artois, are in it."

"What an amalgamation!" exclaimed Grévin.

"France is being secretly invaded, they intend to make a general assault, they will leave no stone unturned. A hundred resolute men commanded by Georges are to attack, hand to hand, the Consular Guard and Consul."

"Ah! indeed! Denounce them!"

"For two months, the Consul, his minister of police, the prefect and Fouché have held some of the threads of this immense plot; but they do not know its full extent, and at present, in order to know all, they leave the conspirators at large. As to the right," said the notary, "the Bourbons have much more right to plan, conduct and execute an enterprise against Bonaparte, than Bonaparte had to conspire on the 18 Brumaire against the Republic, of which he was the child; he assassinated his mother, and these wish to return to their house. I understand that when the princes saw the closing of the list of the *émigrés*, the erasures multiplied, the Catholic religion re-established, and anti-revolutionary decrees accumulating, they realized that their return would be difficult, if not impossible. Bonaparte became the sole obstacle to such a return, and they wished to remove the obstacle, nothing simpler. Conquered, the conspirators will become

brigands; victorious, they will be heroes, and your perplexity seems to me, then, quite natural."

"The question is," said Malin, "to have the head of the Duc d'Enghien thrown at the Bourbons by Bonaparte, as the Convention threw at kings the head of Louis XVI., in order to steep him as deeply as ourselves in the current of the Revolution; or to overthrow the present idol of the French people and their future emperor, for the purpose of establishing the legitimate throne upon the ruins. I am at the mercy of an event, of a pistol-shot, of a machine of the Rue Saint-Nicaise, which might be successful. They have not told me all. They have proposed to me to rally the Council of State at the critical moment, to direct the legal action in the restoration of the Bourbons."

"Wait," responded the notary.

"Impossible! I have only the present moment in which to arrive at a decision."

"And why?"

"The two Simeuses are hatching treason; they are in the country. I must have them followed, allow them to compromise themselves and rid myself of them, or secretly protect them. I had asked for inferior agents and they send me chosen lynxes, who have gone through Troyes in order to have with them the gendarmerie."

"Gondreville is *the bird in hand* and the conspiracy is *the bird in the bush*," said Grévin. "Neither Fouché nor Talleyrand, your two partners, is in it; play a fair game with them. Why, all

those who cut off the head of Louis XVI. are under the government, France is full of purchasers of national property, and you would wish to recall those who would reclaim Gondreville? If they are not imbeciles, the Bourbons will pass the sponge over all we have done. Inform Bonaparte."

"A man of my rank does not become an informer," said Malin, sharply.

"Of your rank?" exclaimed Grévin, smiling.

"The Seals are offered me."

"I understand your bewilderment and it is for me to see clearly in this political obscurity, to find the way out. Now, it is impossible to foresee the events which can recall the Bourbons, when General Bonaparte has eighty vessels and four hundred thousand men. What is most difficult in expectant politics, is to know when a tottering power will fall; but, my old fellow, that of Bonaparte is in the ascending period.—Is it not Fouché who has had you sounded to know the depth of your design and to rid himself of you?"

"No, I am sure of the ambassador. Moreover, Fouché would not send me two such monkeys, for I know too much not to be suspicious."

"I fear them," said Grévin. "If Fouché is not suspicious of you, does not wish to test you, why does he send them? Fouché does not play such a trick without some reason—"

"This is decisive for me!" exclaimed Malin. "I shall never be at ease with these two Simeuses; perhaps Fouché, who knows my position, does not

wish them to escape, and thinks that he will reach Condé through them."

"Ah! my old fellow, the possessor of Gondreville will not be disturbed under Bonaparte."

In raising his eyes, Malin saw, in the foliage of a large, tufted linden, the barrel of a gun.

"I was not mistaken, I had heard the cocking of a gun," said he to Grévin, after having placed himself behind the trunk of a large tree, where the notary followed him, alarmed by the sudden movement of his friend.

"It's Michu," said Grévin. "I see his red beard."

"Show no sign of fear," said Malin, who walked off slowly, saying several times: "What does this man harbor against the purchasers of this land? It is not you at whom he aimed. If he has heard us, I must complain of him to his supérieurs. We would have done better to go on the plain. Who the deuce would have thought of suspecting the air?"

"We are always learning," said the notary; "but he was far away and we talked in a low tone."

"I am going to say a word or two to Corentin about it," responded Malin.

A few moments after, Michu entered his house, pale, with a frown on his brow.

"What's the matter with you?" said his frightened wife.

"Nothing," he replied, seeing Violette, whose presence was like a thunder-clap to him.

Michu took a chair, quietly seated himself before the fire, into which he threw a letter, after having

drawn it from one of those tin tubes which the soldiers use to enclose their papers. This action, which permitted Marthe to breathe like a person relieved of a great weight, puzzled Violette very much. The manager put his carbine on the mantel of the chimney with admirable coolness. Marianne and Marthe's mother were spinning by the light of a lamp.

"Come, François," said the father, "let us go to bed—Will you go to bed?"

He caught his son roughly around the body and carried him away.

"Go into the cellar," he whispered when on the stairway, after having poured out the third of their contents, "fill two bottles of Mâcon wine, with the Cognac which is on the shelf; then fill a wine bottle with equal parts of white wine and brandy. Do it handily and put the three bottles on the empty cask at the entrance to the cellar. When I open the window, leave the cellar, saddle my horse, mount and ride to Poteau-des-Gueux, where you will await me."

"The little rogue never wants to go to bed," said the manager on entering; "he wishes to do as grown persons, to see, to hear and know everything. You are spoiling my family, Father Violette."

"God bless me! God bless me!" exclaimed Violette, "what has loosened your tongue? You have never talked so much."

"Do you think I allow myself to be spied without knowing it? You are not on the right side, Father

Violette. If, instead of serving those who are against me, you were for me, I would do better for you than to renew your lease—”

“What else?” said the avaricious peasant, his eyes wide open.

“I would sell you my property cheap.”

“Nothing is cheap which must be paid for,” said Violette, sententiously.

“I intend to quit the country, and I will give you my farm of Le Mousseau, the buildings, seed and stock for fifty thousand francs.”

“Really!”

“Does that suit you?”

“Well, I must see.”

“Let us talk of that—But I require earnest-money.”

“I have nothing.”

“A promise.”

“Besides!—”

“Tell me who sent you here.”

“I have returned from where I was going just now and I wished to say a friendly good-evening to you.”

“Returned without your horse? What imbecile do you take me for? You lie, you shall not have my farm.”

“Well, it is Monsieur Grévin, what then! He said to me: ‘Violette, we have need of Michu, go and find him. If he is not in, wait for him.’ I understood that I was to remain here this evening—”

“Were the sharpers from Paris still at the château?”

"Ah! I do not know too much; there was company in the salon."

"You shall have my farm, let us agree on the terms. Wife, go and get the bargain-wine. Bring some of the best Roussillon, the ex-marquis's wine—We are not children. You will find two bottles of it on the empty cask at the entrance, and a bottle of white wine."

"That will do!" said Violette, who never got drunk; "let us drink!"

"You have fifty thousand francs under the floor of your chamber, extending for the entire length of your bed, and you will give them to me fifteen days after the signing of the contract at Grévin's."

Violette looked steadily at Michu and turned pale.

"Ah! you have come to spy on an accomplished Jacobin, who has had the honor of presiding over the Arcis Club, and you think he will not trap you? I have eyes, I have seen the tiles of your floor freshly plastered, and I have concluded that you did not lift them to sow wheat—Let us drink."

Violette, troubled, drank a large glass of wine without paying any attention to the quality; terror had put, as it were, a hot iron in his stomach, in which the brandy was scalded by avarice; he would have given a great deal to be at home in order to hide his treasure in another place. The three women were smiling.

"Does that suit you?" said Michu to Violette, again filling his glass.

"Yes, indeed!"

"You will be at home, old rogue!"

After half an hour of animated discussion over the time of taking possession, over the thousand cavils to which peasants resort in concluding a bargain, in the midst of assertions, of empty wineglasses, of words full of promises, of denials, of such expressions as: "Is it not true?"—"Very true!"—"My word of honor!"—"Just as I said!"—"May I have my head cut off if—"—"May this glass of wine poison me, if what I have said is not truth itself!"—Violette fell forward with his head on the table, not tipsy, but dead drunk; when Michu saw Violette's heavy eyes, he hastened to open the window.

"Where is that rogue, Gaucher?" he asked his wife.

"He is in bed."

"You, Marianne," said the manager to his faithful servant, "go, place yourself near his door, and watch him.—You, mother," he said, "remain downstairs, attend to that spy there, be on the alert, and open the door only at the voice of François. It's a question of life or death!" he added, in a grave tone of voice. "For the sake of all the creatures under my roof, I have not left it this night, and you will hold to this in face of the executioner.—Come wife, come mother, put on your shoes and cap, and let us be off! No questions, I shall go with you."

For three-quarters of an hour that man had in gesture and look a despotic, irresistible authority, drawn from the common and unknown source from

which generals, who are great on the field of battle, where they inflame masses of men, great orators who electrify assemblies, and, let it also be said, great criminals in their daring deeds, receive their extraordinary powers. It appears, then, that it is exhaled from the head, that speech carries with it an irresistible influence, that by his gestures a man communicates his will to others. The three women knew that they were in the midst of a terrible crisis; without being informed, they had a presentiment of it by the rapidity of the actions of this man, whose countenance flashed, whose forehead was expressive, whose eyes then glistened like stars; they had seen sweat at the roots of his hair, more than once his speech had vibrated with impatience and rage. So Marthe obeyed passively. Armed to the teeth, his gun on the shoulder, Michu sprang into the avenue, followed by his wife, and they promptly reached the cross-roads, where François had hidden himself in the bushes.

"The little fellow has comprehension," said Michu, on seeing him.

It was his first remark. His wife and he had run there without being able to utter a word.

"Return to the pavilion, conceal yourself in the most bushy tree, watch the country, the park," said he to his son. "We are in bed, the door will be opened for no one. Your grandmother is watching, she will not stir until she hears your voice. Remember the least of my words. It's a question of your father's and mother's life. May justice

never know that we have been abroad to-night." After whispering these sentences to his son, who slipped off through the woods, like an eel in the mud, Michu said to his wife:

"Mount! and pray God to be with us. Hold on well! The beast may drop dead."

The words were hardly said, when the horse, against whose body Michu clapped his heels and pressed his powerful knees, started with the speed of a race-horse; the animal seemed to understand his master; in a quarter of an hour, the forest was passed. Michu, without having deviated from the shortest route, found himself at a point on the border of the forest, from which the roofs of the château of Cinq-Cygne appeared, illuminated by the moon. He fastened his horse to a tree and quickly reached the hillock, from which the valley of Cinq-Cygne is overlooked.

The château, which Marthe and Michu surveyed together for a moment, produced a charming effect on the landscape. Although it had no importance as to extent and architecture, it is not wanting in a certain archæological merit. This old edifice of the fifteenth century, situated on an eminence, surrounded by deep, wide ditches, still full of water, is built of pebbles and mortar; its walls are seven feet deep. Its simplicity recalls admirably the rude and warlike life of feudal times. This really unpretending château consists of two large, reddish towers, separated by a long main building, pierced with real stone windows, whose rudely sculptured

cross-bars resemble shoots of the grape-vine. The staircase is on the outside, in the middle, and placed in a pentagonal tower, in which there is a small door with a pointed arch. The ground floor, whose interior was modernized by Louis XIV., as well as the second story, is surmounted by immense roofs, pierced by windows with sculptured tympanums. Before the château is a spacious lawn, whose trees had been recently cut down. On each side of the entrance bridge are two small houses, in which the gardeners live, and separated by a slender grating, without character, evidently modern. On the right and left of the lawn, divided into two parts by a paved road, extend the stables, cattle-houses, barns, woodsheds, bakery and poultry-houses, the servants' quarters, constructed without doubt, out of the remains of two wings, similar to the present château. Formerly, the castle must have been square, fortified at the four angles, and defended by an enormous tower, with an arched porch, at the foot of which, in place of a grating, was a draw-bridge. The two large towers, whose conical roofs had not been razed, and the belfry of the middle tower, gave some character to the village. The church, which is also old, displayed at some distance its pointed belfry, and harmonized with the ensemble of the castle. All the summits and cones, around which the light played and sparkled, shone brilliantly under the moon. Michu surveyed this manorial habitation in such a way as to confuse the ideas of his wife, for his more composed face

disclosed an expression of hope, and a sort of pride. His eyes embraced the horizon with a certain distrust, he listened: it must then have been nine o'clock, the moon shed its light over the margin of the forest, and the hillock especially was brightly lighted up. This position appeared dangerous to Michu, who descended with an apparent fear of being seen. However, no suspicious noise troubled the peace of that beautiful valley, inclosed on that side by the forest of Nodsmé. Marthe, exhausted, trembling, looked for any event which might occur after such a journey. In what was she to be employed? In a good action, or a crime? At this moment, Michu whispered to his wife:

"You will go and find the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne, you will ask to speak to her; when you see her, you will request her to step aside. If no one can hear you, say to her: 'Mademoiselle, the lives of your cousins are in danger, and he who will explain the why and wherefore awaits you.' If she is afraid, if she is suspicious, add: 'They are in the conspiracy against the First Consul, and the conspiracy is discovered.' Don't give your name, they are too suspicious of us."

Marthe Michu looked at her husband and said:

"You are aiding them, then?"

"Well, what next?" said he, frowning and thinking a reproach was intended.

"You do not understand me!" exclaimed Marthe, taking Michu's large hand, and falling at his knees,

she kissed that hand, which was at once covered with tears.

"Go, quickly! you shall weep afterwards," said he, giving her a sudden and strong embrace.

When he no longer heard the steps of his wife, this man of iron had tears in his eyes. He was suspicious of Marthe on account of her father's opinions, he had concealed from her the secrets of his life; but the beauty of the simple character of his wife suddenly appeared to him, as the grandeur of his own had just been unexpectedly shown to her. Marthe passed from the profound humiliation which the degradation of a man, whose name one bears, causes, to the delight which his glory affords; she experienced this change without transition, was there not occasion to falter?

A prey to the greatest anxiety, she had, as she told him later, gone through blood from the pavilion to Cinq-Cygne, and in a moment felt herself lifted to the skies among the angels. He who felt that he was not appreciated, who took the peevish and melancholy attitude of his wife for a want of affection, who left her to herself and lived out of doors, giving all his affection to his son, had understood in a moment all that the tears of that woman meant; she execrated the rôle which her beauty and parental caprice had forced her to play. Happiness had blazed for them with its most beautiful flame, in the midst of the storm, as a flash of lightning. And it was to be a lightning-flash! Each of them thought of the ten years of misunderstanding and

felt responsible for it. Michu remained standing, motionless, resting his elbow on the carbine, and his chin on his elbow, lost in a profound reverie. Such a moment makes us accept all the sorrows of a most sorrowful past.

Agitated by a thousand thoughts similar to her husband's, Marthe was then troubled by the danger to which the Simeuses were exposed, for she understood all, even the faces of the two Parisians; but she was unable to account for the carbine. She started like a hind, and reached the road to the château; she was surprised to hear behind her the footsteps of a man, she uttered a cry, Michu's large hand was on her mouth.

"From the height of the knoll, I saw the silver of the laced hats glittering in the distance! Enter by a break in the ditch between Mademoiselle's tower and the stables; the dogs will not bark at you. Pass into the garden, call the young countess to the window, have her horse saddled, tell her to lead him to the ditch; I will be there after having studied the plan of the Parisians, and found the means of eluding them."

This danger, which was rolling on like an avalanche, and which it was necessary to anticipate, gave wings to Marthe.

*

The Frankish name which is common to the Cinq-Cygne and the Chargebœuf is Duineff. Cinq-Cygne became the name of the younger branch of the Chargebœuf, after the defense of a castle, made in the absence of their father, by five daughters of that house, all remarkably white, and from whom no one would have expected such conduct. One of the first Comtes de Champagne wished by this pretty name to perpetuate this remembrance as long as that family might live. After this singular exploit, the daughters of this family were proud, but they were not, perhaps, always pale. The youngest, Laurence, was, contrary to the Salic law, heiress of the name, arms and fiefs. The King of France had approved the charter of the Comte de Champagne, in virtue of which, in that family, the women were ennobled and had the right of succession. Laurence was then Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne, her husband was to assume her name and coat of arms, on which was inscribed as motto the sublime reply, made by the oldest of the five sisters, to the demand for the surrender of the château: *Mourir en chantant!*—to die singing.—Worthy of these noble heroines, Laurence was of a paleness which seemed to be a pledge of fortune. The most delicate tracery of her blue veins was seen under the fine and close texture of her skin.

Her hair, of the most beautiful blond, was marvelously becoming to her deep blue eyes. Everything about her pertained to prettiness and delicacy. In her frail body, notwithstanding her slender form and milky complexion, lived a soul, tempered like that of a man of the most elevated character, but which no one, not even an observer, would have divined from the aspect of a gentle physiognomy, and an oval face, whose profile bore a vague resemblance to the head of a sheep. This excessive yet noble gentleness appeared to verge on the stupidity of the lamb. "I have the dreamy air of a sheep," she sometimes said, smiling. Laurence, who spoke little, did not seem thoughtful, but torpid. If a serious circumstance arose, the concealed Judith was at once revealed and became sublime, and circumstances had, unfortunately, never been wanting. At thirteen, Laurence, after the events with which you are familiar, found herself an orphan, before the place at Troyes, on which the evening before towered one of the most curious houses of sixteenth century architecture, the Hôtel Cinq-Cygne. Monsieur d'Hauteserre, one of her relatives, having become her guardian, at once took the heiress to the country. This benevolent country gentleman, appalled by the death of the Abbé d'Hauteserre, his brother, struck by a ball at the moment he was fleeing, disguised as a peasant, was not in a position to be able to defend his ward's interests: he had two sons in the army of the princes, and every day at the least noise, he thought the

municipal guard of Arcis was coming to arrest him. Proud of having sustained a siege and of possessing the historic paleness of her ancestors, Laurence despised this prudent timidity of the old gentleman, bowed under the blast of the tempest; she thought only of becoming illustrious. Moreover, she boldly placed in her poor salon of Cinq-Cygne, the portrait of Charlotte Corday, wreathed with small branches of oak entwined. She corresponded by courier with the twins, in contempt of the law, which would have punished her with death. The messenger, who also risked his life, brought back the replies. Laurence, after the catastrophes of Troyes, lived only for the triumph of the Royal cause. After having soundly judged Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre and recognized in them an honest nature, but without energy, she put them outside the laws of her sphere. Laurence had too much sense and real indulgence to entertain any feeling against them on account of their character; good, amiable, affectionate toward them, she did not communicate to them any one of her secrets. Nothing closes up the soul like constant dissimulation in the bosom of the family. At her majority, Laurence allowed her affairs to be managed by the good old man D'Hauteserre, as in the past. So that her favorite mare was well groomed, her servant Catherine was dressed suitably to her taste, and her little domestic Gothard was clothed properly, she cared little for the rest. She directed her thought to a purpose too elevated to descend to the occupations which, in other times, would no doubt

have pleased her. Her toilet was of little importance to her, and, moreover, her cousins were not there. Laurence wore a bottle-green habit when on horseback, a dress of common stuff with a jacket ornamented with frogs, for walking, and one of silk, for house wear. Gothard, her little equerry, an active and courageous boy of fifteen, escorted her, for she was almost always out and hunted over all the lands of Gondreville without opposition from the farmers or Michu. She rode admirably well on horseback, and her skill in hunting bordered on the miraculous. In the country, they always called her *Mademoiselle*, even during the Revolution.

Whoever has read the beautiful romance *Rob Roy*, must recall one of the rare female characters, Diana Vernon, for whose conception Walter Scott has laid aside his habitual coldness. This recollection will serve to give a knowledge of Laurence, if you add to the qualities of the Scottish huntress the restrained exaltation of Charlotte Corday, while suppressing the amiable vivacity which makes Diana so attractive. The young countess had seen her mother die, the Abbé d'Hauteserre fall, the Marquis and Marquise de Simeuse perish on the scaffold; her only brother died of his wounds, her two cousins, who were serving in the army of Condé, were liable to be killed at any moment; in fine, the fortune of the Simeuses and of the Cinq-Cygnés had just been devoured by the Republic with no profit to the Republic. Her seriousness, having degenerated into apparent stupor, must now be understood.

Monsieur d'Hauteserre proved himself, moreover, a most conscientious and careful guardian. Under his administration Cinq-Cygne assumed the air of a farm. The goodman, who resembled much less a knight than a proprietor cultivating his estate, had turned to account the park and gardens, the extent of which was about two hundred acres, and from which he obtained subsistence for the domestics and horses, and the firewood. Thanks to the most rigid economy, at her majority the countess had already recovered, in consequence of the investment of the revenues in government security, a competent fortune. In 1798, the heiress received an income of twenty thousand francs from the government investment, the arrearages of which were in truth due, and fourteen thousand francs from Cinq-Cygne, the leases of which had been renewed at a considerable increase of rent. Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre had retired to the country with a life annuity of three thousand francs from the Tontines Lafarge: this wreck of their fortune permitted them to live nowhere else but at Cinq-Cygne: moreover, Laurence's first act was to give them possession for life of the pavilion which they occupied. The d'Hauteserres, having become avaricious for their ward, as well as for themselves, and who every year piled up their thousand crowns, while thinking of their sons, furnished miserable fare to the countess. The total expenditure of Cinq-Cygne did not exceed five thousand francs a year. But Laurence, who did not descend to any detail, found

everything right. The guardian and his wife, insensibly governed by the imperceptible influence of that character which is exercised about the most trifling things, had ended by admiring her whom they had known as a child, a sentiment quite rare. But Laurence had in her manner, in her guttural voice, in her imperious look, that inexplicable power which always overawes, even when it is not real, for with fools, shallowness passes for depth. To the vulgar, profoundness is incomprehensible. From this springs, perhaps, the admiration of people for all that they do not understand. Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre impressed by the habitual silence and wildness of the young countess, were constantly in expectation of something important. In doing good with discernment and in not permitting herself to be deceived, Laurence obtained the respect of the peasants, although she was an aristocrat. Her sex, her name, her misfortune, her strange manner of life, all contributed to give her authority over the inhabitants of the valley of Cinq-Cygne. She occasionally went away for a day or two, accompanied by Gothard; and never on her return did Monsieur or Madame d'Hauteserre question her as to the motives of her absence. Laurence, let it be understood, was not whimsical. The virago was concealed under the most feminine and apparently the most delicate frame. Her heart was of an excessive sensibility, but she had in her face virile determination and stoical firmness. Her penetrating eyes could not weep. To see her white and delicate

wrist, marked with blue veins, no one would have imagined it able to defy that of the most hardy cavalier. Her hand, so soft, so flexible, was as skilful with a pistol or gun as that of an experienced hunter. In the open air, she always wore a little coquettish beaver hat and a green veil which women wear on horseback; moreover, her face, so delicate, her white neck, enveloped in a black cravat, had never suffered from her journeys in the open air.

Under the Directory and at the commencement of the Consulship, Laurence had been able to behave in this way, without the interference of anyone; but when the government became regular, the new authorities, the prefect of the Aube, the friends of Malin and Malin himself, endeavored to discredit her. Laurence thought only of the overthrow of Bonaparte, whose ambition and triumph had excited in her a rage, as it were, but a cold and calculating rage. An obscure and unknown enemy of that glory-crowned man, she kept her eye on him with terrible steadiness, from the depths of her valley and forests; she sometimes wished to go and kill him in the environs of Saint-Cloud or of the Malmaison. The execution of this design might have already explained the exercises and habits of her life; but initiated, after the rupture of the peace of Amiens, into the conspiracy of the men who tried to turn the 18 Brumaire against the First Consul, she had, from that time, subordinated her energy and hatred to the very vast and very well-directed plan, which was to reach Bonaparte outside of France, through

the powerful coalition of Russia, Austria and Prussia, which, as Emperor, he vanquished at Austerlitz; and, at home, through a coalition of men of the most opposite views, but united by a common hatred, among whom several meditated, like Laurence, the death of that man without being frightened at the word assassination. This young girl, so frail in appearance, so strong to anyone who knew her well, was, then, at this moment, the faithful and sure guide of the gentlemen who came from Germany to take part in this serious attack. Fouché availed himself of this combination of the *émigrés* beyond the Rhine to envelop the Duc d'Enghien in the plot. The presence of this prince on the territory of Baden, at a short distance from Strasbourg, gave later some weight to these suppositions. Whether or not the prince had really any knowledge of the enterprise, or was to enter France in the event of success, is the important question to decide, and is one of the secrets about which, as about some others, the princes of the House of Bourbon have observed the most profound silence. As the history of that time becomes old, impartial historians will at least discover imprudence on the part of the prince in approaching the frontier at the moment when an immense conspiracy was to break out, in the secret of which the whole Royal family had certainly shared. The prudence which Malin had shown in conferring with Grévin in the open air, this young girl applied in her most trifling relations. She received emissaries, conferred with them either at the different extremities

of the forest of Nodesme or beyond the valley of Cinq-Cygne, between Sézanne and Brienne. She often made fifteen leagues at a single stretch with Gothard, and returned to Cinq-Cygne without anyone's being able to notice on her fresh face the least sign of fatigue or preoccupation. She had, at first, detected in the eyes of this little cow-herd, then nine years old, the simple admiration which children have for the extraordinary. She made him her groom, and taught him to look after the horses with the care and attention which the English give to that occupation. She recognized in him a desire to do well, intelligence and an absence of all calculation; she tested his devotion and found in him not only its spirit, but its nobility: he had no idea of recompense; she cultivated this soul, still so young, she was good to him, grandly good. She attached him to herself by attaching herself to him, by refining, herself, that half-savage character without taking from him his frank sincerity or simplicity. When she had sufficiently tested the quasi-canine fidelity which she had fostered, Gothard became her ingenious and ingenuous accomplice. The little peasant, whom no one could suspect, went from Cinq-Cygne to Nancy and returned sometimes without anyone's knowing that he had been away from home. He practised all the arts employed by spies. The excessive distrust which his mistress had communicated to him, impaired in no way his disposition. Gothard, who possessed at once the artifice of women, the candor of the child, and the perpetual attention of the

conspirator, concealed these admirable qualities under the profound ignorance and torpor of the peasantry. This little fellow appeared simple, weak and awkward; but once at work, he was as nimble as a fish, he escaped like an eel; he understood like a dog, by a look; he scented the thought. His large amiable face, round and red, his brown, sleepy eyes, his hair cut like that of the peasants, his dress and his stunted growth, gave him the appearance of a child ten years old. Under the protection of their cousin, who, from Strasbourg to Bar-sur-Aube, watched over them, the D'Hauterres and De Simeuses, accompanied by several other *émigrés*, came by way of Alsace, Lorraine and Champagne, while other conspirators, not less courageous, entered France by the cliffs of Normandy. Clothed as workmen, the D'Hauterres and the Simeuses had traveled from forest to forest, guided from place to place by persons chosen three months before in each department by Laurence, from among the people the most devoted to the House of Bourbon and the least suspected. The *émigrés* slept during the day and traveled at night. Each of them brought with him two devoted soldiers, one of whom went in advance to reconnoitre, while the other remained in the rear to cover the retreat in case of disaster. Thanks to these military precautions, this precious detachment had reached, without misfortune, the forest of Noddesme, chosen as a place of rendezvous. Twenty-seven other noblemen also entered by Switzerland, crossed Bourgogne, and were guided toward Paris

with like precaution. Monsieur de Rivière counted on five hundred men, of whom one hundred were noblemen, officers of this devoted battalion. Messieurs de Polignac and De Rivière, whose conduct as chiefs was exceedingly remarkable, observed a secrecy which was impenetrable to all those accomplices who were not discovered. It can, moreover, be said, to-day, according to the revelations made during the Restoration, that Bonaparte knew no more of the extent of the dangers that he then ran, than England did of the peril in which the camp of Boulogne placed her; and yet at no time were the police more ingeniously or more ably directed.

At the time when this history begins, a poltroon, who is always found in conspiracies which are not confined to a small number of men equally courageous; a conspirator, brought face to face with death, gave information, fortunately insufficient as to the extent of the enterprise, but sufficiently precise as to its object. Moreover, the police, as Malin said to Grévin, allowed the conspirators under watch to have liberty of action, in order to embrace all the ramifications of the plot. Nevertheless, the government had been in some measure forced to act by Georges Cadoudal, a resolute man, who took counsel of himself only, and who had concealed himself in Paris with twenty-five Chouans in order to attack the First Consul. Laurence united in her project hatred and love. To destroy Bonaparte and bring back the Bourbons, was it not to recover Gondreville and to make the fortune of her cousins?

These two sentiments, of which one is the counterpart of the other, sufficed, at the age of twenty-three especially, to bring into action all the faculties of the soul and all the forces of life. Moreover, for two months, Laurence appeared more beautiful to the inhabitants of Cinq-Cygne than at any time before. Her cheeks had become rosy, hope gave at times an expression of pride to her countenance; but when the evening *Gazette* had been read, in which the conservative action of the First Consul was revealed, she dropped her eyes so as to permit no one to see in them the imminent certainty of the approaching fall of that enemy of the Bourbons. Consequently, no one at the château suspected that the young countess had seen her cousins the night before. The two sons of Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre had passed the night in the countess's own chamber under the roof which sheltered their father and mother; for Laurence, in order to provoke no suspicion, after the two D'Hauteserres had retired between one and two o'clock in the morning, went to rejoin her cousins at the rendezvous and took them to the middle of the forest, where she had concealed them in the abandoned cabin of a wood-merchant's agent. Sure of again seeing them, she did not show the slightest sign of joy, nothing betrayed in her the emotions which spring from expectation; in fine, she had known how to efface the traces of the pleasure caused by having seen them; she was impassible. Pretty Catharine, the daughter of her

nurse, and Gothard, both in the secret, modeled their conduct upon that of their mistress. Catharine was nineteen years old. At that age, as at Gothard's, a young girl is fanatical and allows her throat to be cut without uttering a word. As to Gothard, to smell the perfume which the countess put on her hair and garments, would have made him endure torture without a murmur.

*

At the moment when Marthe, informed of the imminence of the danger, slipped away with the rapidity of a shadow, toward the break indicated by Michu, the salon of the château of Cinq-Cygne offered a most peaceful sight. Its inhabitants were so far from suspecting the storm about to burst over them, that their attitude would have excited the compassion of the first person who might know their situation. In the high fireplace, ornamented with a pier-glass, on which, over the mirror, shepherdesses in hoop petticoats were dancing, blazed one of those fires which are seen only in the châteaux situated on the borders of woods. At the corner of this fireplace, on a large, square easy-chair of wood, gilded and trimmed with magnificent green lampas, the countess was, in a manner, stretched out in the attitude which complete exhaustion suggests. Having only arrived at six o'clock from the confines of Brie, after having scoured the country in advance of the band, in order to assure the safe arrival of the four noblemen at the spot where they were to take their last rest before entering Paris, she had surprised Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre at the close of their dinner. Impelled by hunger, she had seated herself at the table without taking off her muddy riding-habit or boots. Instead of disrobing after

dinner, she had felt overcome by all her fatigues, and had allowed her handsome bare head, covered with its thousand blond ringlets, to fall on the back of the large chair, while her feet were advanced, resting on a footstool. The fire dried the mud on her riding-habit and boots. Her buckskin gloves, her little beaver hat, her green veil, and her riding whip were on the pier-table, where she had thrown them. At one time she looked at the old clock of Boule, which was on the mantelpiece between two candelabra, embellished with flowers, to determine by the time, whether the four conspirators were in bed; at another time, at the boston-table, placed before the chimney, and occupied by Monsieur d'Hauteserre and his wife, the curate of Cinq-Cygne and his sister.

Although these persons should not be incorporated in this drama, still their heads will have the merit of presenting one of those aspects which the aristocracy assumed after its defeat in 1793. In this relation the description of the salon of Cinq-Cygne has the savor of history seen in *déshabillé*.

The tall, thin, florid gentleman in robust health, then fifty-two years old, would have appeared capable of energetic action, had it not been for his large faïence-blue eyes, which indicated an extreme simplicity. His face, terminated by a long, peaked and turned-up chin, had a space between his nose and mouth disproportioned to the laws of design, which gave him an air of submission in perfect harmony with his character, with which

Copyrighted by



Dec 1891

Copyrighted, 1897 by J. S. S. Co.



the least details of his physiognomy agreed. Thus, his gray hair, matted by his hat, which he nearly always wore, formed, as it were, a small cap, and completed the pear-shaped contour of his head. His forehead, very much wrinkled by his country life and continual anxiety, was flat and without expression. His aquiline nose somewhat relieved his face; the only sign of strength was in his bushy eyebrows, which were still black, and his florid complexion; but this sign did not belie itself; the nobleman, although unpretending and amiable, adhered to the monarchy and the Catholic faith, which no consideration would have made him abandon. This amiable man would have allowed himself to be arrested, he would not have fired on the municipal guard, and would have calmly gone to the scaffold. His life annuity of three thousand francs, his only resource, had been an obstacle to his emigrating. He obeyed, then, the *de facto* government, without ceasing to be attached to the Royal family, and to desire its restoration; but he would have refused to compromise himself by participation in any attempt in favor of the Bourbons. He belonged to that portion of the Royalists, who have eternally borne in mind that they had been vanquished and robbed; who from that time have remained silent, economical, rancorous, without energy, but incapable of any abjuration or of any sacrifice; ever ready to salute triumphant royalty, friends of religion and of the clergy, but resolved to support all the outrages of misfortune. It was no

longer a question of opinion, but of obstinacy. Action is the essence of parties. Without ability, but honest, avaricious as a peasant, and, nevertheless, noble in manner, bold in his vows, but discreet in word and action, turning everything to account and ready to permit himself to be named mayor of Cinq-Cygne, Monsieur d'Hauteserre admirably represented the honorable noblemen on whose forehead God has written the word *mites*, who allowed the storms of the Revolution to pass over their homes and heads, who reasserted themselves under the Restoration, enriched by their concealed savings, proud of their discreet attachment, and who returned to their country-seats after 1830. His dress, expressive covering of this character, pictured the man and the time. Monsieur d'Hauteserre wore one of those nut-brown great-coats with a small collar, which the last Duc d'Orléans had brought into fashion on his return from England and which were, during the Revolution, a compromise, as it were, between the hideous, popular costumes and the elegant frockcoat of the aristocracy. His velvet waistcoat, with flowered stripes, the style of which recalled those of Robespierre and Saint-Just, allowed to be seen the upper part of a ruffle in small plaits, resting on the shirt. He still wore breeches, but his were of coarse blue cloth, with burnished steel buckles. His black floss-silk stockings defined the form of his deer-shaped legs, shod with heavy shoes, secured by black cloth gaiters. He had retained the muslin

collar with a thousand plaits, fastened with a gold buckle at the neck. The good man had never intended to set up any political eclecticism in adopting this costume, at once peasant, revolutionary and aristocratic: he had very innocently conformed to circumstances.

Madame d'Hauteserre, forty years old and used up by emotion, had a faded face, which always seemed to be posing for a portrait; and her lace cap, ornamented with white satin bows, contributed singularly to give it that solemn air. She still used powder in spite of the white neckerchief, the puce color silk robe with plain sleeves and ample skirt, last and sad costume of Queen Marie-Antoinette. She had a pinched nose, a pointed chin, an almost triangular visage, and watery eyes; but she applied a suspicion of rouge, which gave a bright expression to her gray eyes. She used snuff, and at every pinch, practised those nice precautions which women of studied elegance formerly abused; all the details of her snuff-taking constituted a ceremony, which is explained by this sentence: she had pretty hands.

For two years the former preceptor of the two Simeuses, a friend of the Abbé d'Hauteserre, named Goujet, Abbé of the Minimes, had taken for retreat the curacy of Cinq-Cygne through friendship for the D'Hauteserres and the young countess. His sister, Mademoiselle Goujet, had an income of seven hundred francs, which she united with the slender salary of the curate, for whom she kept house.

Neither the church nor the parsonage had been sold in consequence of their little value. The Abbé Goujet then lived a few steps from the château, since the same wall separated the garden of the parsonage and the park in some places. Moreover, twice a week, the Abbé Goujet and his sister dined at Cinq-Cygne, where, every evening, they went to play cards with the D'Hauteresses. Laurence did not know a card. The Abbé Goujet, an old man with white hair and a face as destitute of color as that of an aged woman, was gifted with an amiable smile and a soft, insinuating voice; the dullness of his rather striking visage was relieved by very keen eyes and a forehead which breathed intelligence. Medium-sized and well made, he held to the black coat *à la française*, wore silver buckles on his breeches and shoes, black silk stockings, a black waistcoat, on which fell his clerical neckcloth, which gave him a grand air without detracting from his dignity. This abbé, who became Bishop of Troyes at the Restoration, habituated in his past life to judge young people, had divined the elevated character of Laurence; he formed a true estimate of her value, and had at first sight shown a respectful deference to the young girl, which contributed greatly to render her independent at Cinq-Cygne and to subordinate to her the austere old lady and the good-natured nobleman, to whom according to usage, she should have certainly owed obedience. For six months the Abbé Goujet observed Laurence with the genius peculiar to priests, who are the most perspicacious

of men; and without knowing that this young girl of twenty-three thought of overthrowing Bonaparte, at the moment when her delicate hand was unraveling a frog torn from her riding-habit, he supposed her agitated by some great project.

Mademoiselle Goujet was one of those spinsters whose portrait is described in a few words, which will enable the least imaginative to form an idea of them: she belonged to the gawky species. She was conscious of her homeliness, she was the first to laugh at her total want of beauty, while showing her long teeth, as yellow as her complexion, and her bony hands. She was thoroughly good and amiable. She wore the famous jacket of the olden time, a very ample skirt, with pockets always full of keys, a cap with ribbons, and a frizette. She was forty years old long before her time; but she compensated herself for this by remaining at that age for twenty years. She venerated the nobility and knew how to maintain her own dignity in rendering to noble persons all the respect and homage due them.

This company had come to Cinq-Cygne very opportunely for Madame d'Hauteserre, who had not, like her husband, any rural occupation, or like Laurence, the tonic of hatred to sustain the burden of a solitary life. Moreover, for six years everything had, in a measure, improved. The Catholic religion, which had been re-established, afforded the means of performing religious duties, which are attended with more celebration in the country than anywhere else. Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre,

reassured by the conservative action of the First Consul, had been able to correspond with their sons and have tidings of them. They no longer trembled for their safety; they implored them to solicit their erasure from the list of the proscribed and to return to France. The Treasury had paid the overdue interest on the national debt, and was paying regularly every half year. The D'Hauterres had at that time, in addition to their annuity, an income of eight thousand francs. The old nobleman congratulated himself on his wise foresight; he had invested all his savings, twenty thousand francs, and his ward's savings, before the 18 Brumaire, which, as we know, advanced the Funds from twelve to eighteen francs.

For a long time Cinq-Cygne had remained unproductive, abandoned and devastated. Actuated by prudential motives, the cautious guardian had been unwilling, during the revolutionary commotions, to change its aspect; but on the Peace of Amiens, he had made a journey to Troyes in order to bring back some of the wreck of the pillaged hotels, bought from second-hand dealers. The salon had then been furnished under his supervision. Elegant curtains of white lampas, figured with green flowers, from the Hôtel Simeuse, adorned the six windows of the salon in which these personages met. This immense room was entirely covered with wainscoting laid out in panels, inclosed in a beaded moulding, ornamented with masks at the angles and painted in two shades of gray. The upper parts of

the four doors presented some of those subjects in cameos with gray grounds, which were in vogue under Louis XV. The good man had found at Troyes some gilded consoles, a piece of furniture in green lampas, a candlestick of crystal, a card-table in marquetry, and everything which could contribute to the restoration of Cinq-Cygne. In 1792, all the furniture of the château had been taken, for the pillage of the hotels had its rebound in the valley. Whenever the old nobleman went to Troyes, he returned with some relic of former splendor, at one time with an elegant carpet, like that on the floor of the salon; at another, with a part of the tableware or some old porcelain of Saxony or Sèvres. After the lapse of six months, he ventured to dig up the silver-plate of Cinq-Cygne, which the cook had buried in a little house belonging to him and situated at the end of one of those long faubourgs of Troyes.

This faithful servant, named Durieu, and his wife, had always followed the fortune of their young mistress. Durieu was the factotum of the château, and his wife was the housekeeper. Durieu had for aid in the kitchen, Catherine's sister, to whom he taught his art, and who became an excellent cook. An old gardener, his wife, his son, paid by the day, and their daughter, employed as cow-keeper, completed the personnel of the château. For six months, Durieu's wife had been in possession of a livery in the colors of the Cinq-Cygne, which she had made for the gardener's son and Gothard. Although well reprovved for this imprudence by

Monsieur d'Hauteserre, she had the pleasure of seeing the dinner served on the feast of Saint-Laurent, for the birthday anniversary of Laurence, almost as of old. This slow and laborious restoration of things was a source of joy to Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre and the Durieus. Laurence smiled at what she called child's play. But the good man D'Hauteserre also thought of the substantial, he repaired the buildings, rebuilt the walls, planted trees wherever there was a chance for them to grow, and did not allow an inch of ground to remain unproductive. Moreover, the valley of Cinq-Cygne looked upon him as an oracle in agricultural matters. He had been able to recover one hundred acres of disputed land, not sold, and incorporated by the commune in its common property; he had converted them into artificial meadows, which furnished pasturage for the cattle, and had enclosed them with poplars, which in six years grew wonderfully. He intended to purchase lands, utilize the buildings of the château, have a second farm and manage it himself.

Life had been then, for two years, an almost happy one at the château. Monsieur d'Hauteserre left the house at sunrise and went to look after his workmen, for he employed people continually; he returned to breakfast, after which he mounted a farmer's small nag and made his round like a guard; then on his return to dinner, he finished the day in playing boston. All the inhabitants of the château had their occupations, life there was as regular as in

a monastery. Laurence only caused uneasiness by her unexpected journeys, by her absences, by what Madame d'Hauteserre called her larks. However, there existed at Cinq-Cygne two policies and some causes of dissension. At first, Durieu and his wife were jealous of Gothard and Catherine, who were more intimate than they with their young mistress, the idol of the house. Then the two D'Hauteserres, supported by Mademoiselle Goujet and the curate, wished their sons, as well as the two Simeuses, to return to France and participate in the happiness of that peaceful life, instead of living unhappily in a foreign land. Laurence stigmatized this odious compromise, and represented pure, aggressive and implacable royalism. The four old people, who did not wish to see a happy existence hazarded, nor this spot of earth deluged with the furious waters of the revolutionary torrent, endeavored to convert Laurence to their really sound views, foreseeing that she counted for much in the resistance which thier sons and the two Simeuses made to any effort to induce them to return to France. The lofty disdain of their ward alarmed these poor people, who made no mistake in fearing what they considered rash judgment. This dissension had shown itself at the time of the explosion of the infernal machine of the Rue Saint-Nicaise, the first royal attempt made against the conqueror of Marengo, after his refusal to treat with the House of Bourbon. The D'Hauteserres considered it fortunate that Bonaparte had escaped this

danger, believing that the republicans were the authors of that attempt. Laurence wept with rage on seeing the First Consul saved. Her despair got the better of her habitual dissimulation, she accused God of betraying the sons of Saint-Louis.

"I," she exclaimed, "I would have succeeded! Have we not," said she to the Abbé Goujet, remarking the profound stupefaction produced by her expression, on everyone present, "the right to attack usurpation in every possible way?"

"My child," replied the Abbé Goujet, "the Church has, indeed, been attacked and censured by the philosophers for having formerly held that we could employ against usurpers the arms which usurpers employed to succeed; but, at present, the Church owes too much to the First Consul not to protect and shield him from this maxim, due, moreover, to the Jesuits."

"So the Church abandons us!" she replied mournfully.

From that day, every time the four old people spoke of submitting to Providence, the young countess left the room. For some time the curate, more adroit than the guardian, instead of discussing principles, set forth the material advantages of the consular government, not so much with a view to converting the countess, as to catch in her eyes expressions which might enlighten him as to her projects. Gothard's absences, the frequent journeys of Laurence, and her preoccupation, which lately showed itself in her countenance, in short, a

number of small things which could not escape notice in the silence and tranquillity of Cinq-Cygne, —especially the anxious eyes of the D’Hauteserres, of the Abbé Goujet and the Durieus,—all had roused the fears of these submissive royalists. But, as no event occurred, and as the most perfect calm reigned in the political sphere for several days, the life of this little château had again become peaceful. Every one had attributed the journeys of the countess to her passion for hunting.

We can imagine the profound silence which, at nine o’clock, reigned in the park, in the courtyard, without and within the château of Cinq-Cygne, where, at that time, surroundings and persons were so harmoniously blended, where the most profound peace reigned, where abundance returned, and where the good and prudent nobleman hoped to convert his ward to his system of obedience by an uninterrupted succession of fortunate results. These royalists continued to play the game of boston, which spread throughout France ideas of independence under a frivolous form, which was invented in honor of the American Revolution, and whose terms recall the struggle encouraged by Louis XVI. While playing *indépendences* or *misères*, they watched Laurence, who, soon overcome by sleep, slept with a smile of irony on her lips: her last thought had embraced the peaceful picture of that table, at which a few words, informing the D’Hauteserres that their sons had, the night before, slept under their roof, would have caused the greatest consternation.

What young woman of twenty-three would not have been proud, like Laurence, of hewing her own destiny, and would not have had, like her, a slight impulse of compassion for those who were so far beneath her?

"She is sleeping," said the abbé. "I have never seen her so fatigued."

"Durieu told me that her mare is almost foundered," said Madame d'Hautesserre; "her gun has not been discharged, the priming-pan was bright, she has not then been hunting."

"Ah! *sac-à-papier!*" said the curate, "that amounts to nothing."

"Bah!" exclaimed Mademoiselle Goujet, "when I was twenty-three and saw myself condemned to a single life, I ran about, I fatigued myself very differently. I understand that the countess rides over the country without an idea of killing game. It will soon be twelve years since she saw her cousins, she loves them; well, were I in her place, were I, like her, young and pretty, I would go straight to Germany! Moreover, the poor darling child is, perhaps, attracted to the frontier."

"You are vivacious, Mademoiselle Goujet," said the curate, smiling.

"But," she replied, "I see you are anxious about the going and coming of a young woman of twenty-three, I will explain it to you."

"Her cousins will return, she will find herself rich, she will finally become sedate," said the good man D'Hautesserre.

"God grant it!" exclaimed the old lady, taking her gold snuffbox, which after the consulship for life, had been again brought to light.

"There is something new in the country," said the good man D'Hautesserre to the curate; "Malin has been at Gondreville since yesterday evening."

"Malin?" exclaimed Laurence, awakened by this name, notwithstanding her sound sleep.

"Yes," replied the curate, "but he leaves to-night and people are lost in conjecture as to the motive of this hasty journey."

"That man," said Laurence, "is the evil genius of our two families."

The young countess had just dreamt of her cousins and the D'Hautesserres, she had seen them menaced with danger. Her beautiful eyes became fixed and dull, while thinking of the peril to which they were exposed in Paris; she arose suddenly and went to her room without saying a word. She occupied the state chamber near which were a small room and an oratory, situated in the turret which faced the forest.

When she had left the salon the dogs barked, they heard a ringing at the small grating, and Durieu, looking frightened, came to the salon and said:

"Here is the mayor! There is something new—"

This mayor, a former huntsman of the House of Simeuse, came occasionally to the château, where, through policy, the D'Hautesserres showed him a deference to which he attached the greatest importance.

This man, named Goulard, had married a rich tradeswoman of Troyes, whose estate was in the commune of Cinq-Cygne, and which he had enlarged by the addition of the lands of a rich abbey, in the acquisition of which he employed all his savings. The vast abbey of the Val-des-Preux, situated at a quarter of a league from the château, made him a residence almost as splendid as Gondreville, in which he and his wife figured like two rats in a cathedral.

"Goulard, you have been greedy!" said mademoiselle, laughing, the first time she saw him at Cinq-Cygne.

Although a very ardent adherent of the Revolution and coldly received by the countess, the mayor always felt himself restrained by an obligation of respect for the Cinq-Cygnés and the Simeuses. Moreover, he closed his eyes to everything which occurred at the château. He called closing his eyes, not seeing the portraits of Louis XVI., of Marie-Antoinette, of the children of the king, of Monsieur, of the Comte d'Artois, of Cazalès, of Charlotte Corday, which ornamented the panels of the salon; not finding it wrong that they in his presence should wish the ruin of the Republic and deride the five directors and all the combinations of that time. The position of this man, who, like very many parvenus, his fortune once made, again confided in the old families, to which he wished to attach himself, had just been turned to account by the two personages whose profession Michu had so promptly

determined, and who, before going to Gondreville, had explored the country.

The man with the glorious traditions of the old police, and Corentin, that phoenix of spies, were on a secret mission. Malin did not deceive himself by imputing a double rôle to these two artists in tragic farces; moreover, before seeing them at work, it is perhaps necessary to describe the head of which they were the arms. Bonaparte, when he became First Consul, found Fouché in control of the general police. The Revolution had boldly, and with reason, created a special minister of police. But on his return from Marengo, Bonaparte created the prefecture of police, placed in it Dubois and called Fouché to the Council of State, and appointed as his successor in the ministry of police, Cochon, member of the national convention, who afterward became Comte de Lapparent. Fouché, who considered the ministry of police as the most important under a government with broad views and a settled policy, saw disgrace or at least a want of confidence in this change. After having recognized in the affair of the infernal machine and of the conspiracy which is involved here, the great superiority of this able statesman, Napoléon restored him to the ministry of police. Then, later, alarmed by the talent which Fouché developed during his absence, at the time of the affair of Walcheren, the Emperor gave this ministry to the Duc de Rovigo and sent the Duc d'Otrante to govern the Illyrian provinces, a veritable exile.

This singular genius, which struck Napoléon with a sort of terror, was not suddenly developed in Fouché. This obscure member of the National Convention, one of the most extraordinary and ill-judged men of that time, was moulded in the tempest. He raised himself under the Directory to the height from which profound men can forecast the future in judging the past; then, suddenly, like certain mediocre actors who become excellent when illumined by a sudden light, he gave proof of dexterity during the rapid revolution of the 18 Brumaire. This pale-faced man, trained in monastic dissimulation, who possessed the secrets of the Montagnards, to whom he belonged, and those of the Royalists, whom he finally joined, had slowly and silently studied the men, things and interests of the political arena. He fathomed the secrets of Bonaparte, gave him useful advice and very valuable information. Satisfied with having shown his skill in management and his usefulness, Fouché carefully refrained from fully disclosing his views, he wished to remain at the head of affairs; but Napoléon's capricious conduct toward him, gave him his political liberty. The ingratitude, or rather the distrust of the Emperor after the affair of Walcheren, gives a clear idea of this man, who, unfortunately for him, was not a grandee and whose conduct was copied after that of the Prince de Talleyrand. At this time, neither his old nor new colleagues suspected the amplitude of his purely ministerial genius, which was essentially governmental, accurate in its forecast

and of incredible sagacity. Without doubt, at this day, every impartial historian regards the excessive egotism of Napoléon as one of the thousand causes of his fall, which, moreover, cruelly expiated his faults. This suspicious sovereign was jealous of his newly acquired power, which influenced his action as much as his secret hatred of able men, the precious legacy of the Revolution, with whom he might have composed a cabinet to whom he could have intrusted his projects. Talleyrand and Fouché were not the only ones who gave him umbrage. Now, the misfortune of usurpers is to have for enemies, both those who have given them the crown and those from whom they have taken it. Napoléon never fully persuaded those to accept his sovereignty whom he had had for superiors or equals, nor those who defended the right: no one, then, thought himself bound by an oath to support him. Malin, an ordinary man, incapable of appreciating the hidden genius of Fouché or of distrusting his rapid view of things, singed himself, like a moth over a candle, by going to him and confidentially requesting that officers might be sent to Gondreville, where, said he, he hoped to obtain information about the conspiracy. Fouché, without alarming his friend by questioning him, asked himself why Malin was going to Gondreville, how it came that he did not give at Paris, and at once, the information he might have. The ex-oratorian, skilled in knavery and aware of the double rôle played by many of the members of the National Convention, said to himself:

“Through whom can Malin know anything, when we still know so little?”

Fouché inferred some latent or prospective complicity and carefully refrained from saying anything to the First Consul. He preferred to make an instrument of Malin, rather than ruin him. Fouché thus reserved for himself a large part of the secrets which he detected, and acquired an influence over men which was greater than Bonaparte's. This duplicity was one of Napoléon's grievances against his minister. Fouché knew of the rascality to which Malin owed his estate of Gondreville, and which compelled him to keep watch on the Simeuses. The Simeuses were serving in the army of Condé, Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne was their cousin, they might, then, be in the neighborhood and take part in the enterprise, their participation implicated in the plot the House of Condé, to which they had devoted themselves. Monsieur de Talleyrand and Fouché desired to explore this obscure corner of the conspiracy of 1803. These considerations were quickly and clearly appreciated by Fouché. But there existed between Malin, Talleyrand and him, bonds which forced him to employ the greatest circumspection and made him desirous of knowing perfectly the interior of the château of Gondreville. Corentin was unreservedly attached to Fouché, like Monsieur de la Besnardière to the Prince de Talleyrand, like Gentz to Monsieur de Metternich, like Dundas to Pitt, like Duroc to Napoléon, like Chavigny to the Cardinal de

Richelieu. Corentin was not the adviser of this minister, but a mere tool, the secret Tristan of this Louis XI. on a small scale; moreover, Fouché had naturally continued him in the ministry of police in order to have there an eye and an arm. This young man, it was said, must have belonged to Fouché by one of those relationships which are not averred, for he recompensed him profusely every time he was employed in active service. Corentin had made a friend of Peyrade, the old pupil of the last lieutenant of police; nevertheless he had secrets from Peyrade. Corentin received from Fouché an order to explore the château of Gondreville, to carry the plan of it in his memory, and to examine its smallest hiding-place.

"We shall, perhaps, be obliged to return there," the ex-minister said to him peremptorily, as *Napoléon* spoke to his lieutenants, when he told them to examine thoroughly the battle-field of Austerlitz, even when he counted on falling back.

Corentin was, moreover, to scrutinize Malin's conduct, to make himself acquainted with his influence in the country and to observe the men whom he employed. Fouché regarded as certain the presence of the Simeuses in the country. By skilfully watching these two devoted officers of the Prince de Condé, Peyrade and Corentin would be able to acquire valuable information relating to the ramifications of the plot beyond the Rhine. At all events, Corentin had the funds, the orders and necessary agents to surround Cinq-Cygne and

watch the country from the forest of Nodésme to Paris. Fouché recommended the greatest circumspection and only authorized a domiciliary visit at Cinq-Cygne in case of positive information given by Malin. Finally, as a precaution, he acquainted Corentin with the inexplicable character of Michu, who had been watched for three years. The judgment of Corentin was that of his chief:

“Malin knows of the conspiracy!—but who knows,” said he to himself, “if Fouché is not also in it?”

*

Corentin, having left for Troyes before Malin, had come to an understanding with the commandant of the gendarmerie and had chosen the most intelligent men, over whom he placed an able captain. Corentin appointed as rendezvous the château of Gondreville, and told this captain to send, at night-fall, a picket of twelve men to four different points in the valley of Cinq-Cygne, sufficiently far apart not to cause alarm. These four pickets were to describe a square and inclose in it the château of Cinq-Cygne. In permitting him to remain master of the château during his consultation with Grévin, Malin had enabled Corentin to accomplish a part of his mission. On his return from the park, the Councillor of State had so positively told Corentin that the Simeuses and the D'Hautesserres were in the country, that the two officers sent out the captain, who, very fortunately for the noblemen, crossed the forest through the avenue, while Michu was making his spy, Violette, drunk. The Councillor of State had commenced by explaining to Peyrade and Corentin the ambush from which he had just escaped. The two Parisians told him the episode of the carbine, and Grévin sent Violette to obtain information about what was taking place at the pavilion. Corentin told the notary to take his friend, the Councillor of State, to his house in the

little town of Arcis, where he might pass the night in greater safety. At the time that Michu darted into the forest and ran to Cinq-Cygne, Peyrade and Corentin left Gondreville in a wretched basket-carriage, drawn by a post-horse and driven by a corporal from Arcis, one of the most crafty men of the legion, whom the commandant of Troyes had advised them to take.

"The best means of catching them all is to forewarn them," said Peyrade to Corentin. "When they are in a state of alarm and anxious to save their papers or flee, we shall fall on them like a thunder-bolt. The cordon of gendarmes in closing around the château will be like the haul of a net. In this way no one will escape."

"You can send them the mayor," said the corporal, "he is complaisant, he wishes them no harm, they will not be suspicious of him."

At the moment that Goulard was going to retire for the night, Corentin, who had ordered the gig to be stopped in a small wood, arrived and told him confidentially, that in a few minutes, a government agent would require him to surround the château of Cinq-Cygne in order to arrest the Messieurs d'Hauteserre and De Simeuse; that in the event of their disappearance, they intended to assure themselves whether or not these Royalists had passed the previous night there, to search the papers of Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne and, perhaps, to arrest the servants and masters of the château.

"Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne," said Corentin,

"is, without doubt, encouraged by influential person-ages, for I am secretly authorized to inform her of this visit and to do everything to save her without compromising myself. Once on the ground, I shall no longer be master, I am not alone, so hurry to the château."

This visit of the mayor in the middle of the evening, astonished the players so much the more as Goulard appeared greatly agitated.

"Where is the countess?" he asked.

"She has retired," said Madame d'Hauteserre.

The incredulous mayor began to listen to the noise made on the second floor.

"What is the matter to-day, Goulard?" said Madame d'Hauteserre.

Goulard was profoundly astonished while examining those faces full of candor, which may be seen in persons of any age. At the aspect of this quiet and harmless game of boston which had been interrupted, he saw nothing in the suspicions of the Paris police. At this moment, Laurence, kneeling in her oratory, was praying fervently for the success of the conspiracy. She prayed God to give aid and comfort to the murderers of Bonaparte; she implored God, lovingly, to crush this destructive man. The fanaticism of Harmodius, of Judith, of Jacques Clément, of Ankaström, of Charlotte Corday, of Limoëlan, animated that noble, pure and virgin soul. Catherine was preparing the bed, Gothard was closing the shutters, so that Marthe Michu, having arrived under the windows, at which she threw stones, could be seen.

"Mademoiselle, there is something new," said Gothard, on seeing a strange woman.

"Silence!" said Marthe in a low voice, "come and listen to me."

Gothard was in the garden in less time than a bird would have taken to drop from a tree to the ground.

"In an instant the château will be surrounded by the gendarmerie.—You," said she to Gothard, "quietly saddle mademoiselle's horse and lead him down through the break in the ditch between this tower and the stables."

Marthe started on seeing Laurence a few steps from her, following Gothard.

"What's the matter?" said Laurence, naturally, and without appearing alarmed.

"The conspiracy against the First Consul is discovered," responded Marthe in the ear of the young countess; "my husband, who wishes to save your two cousins, would like to see you in order to concert a plan of operations with him."

Laurence started back three steps and regarded Marthe.

"Who are you?" said she.

"Marthe Michu."

"I do not know what you want with me," coldly replied Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne.

"Come! you will kill them! Come, in the name of the Simeuses!" said Marthe, falling on her knees and extending her hands to Laurence. "Are there any papers here, anything which can compromise you? From the summit of the forest, my husband

has just seen the gleaming of the muskets and the embroidered chapeaux of the gendarmes."

Gothard had commenced by climbing to the granary, he saw in the distance the gendarmes, he heard the noise of their horses amid the profound silence of the country; he hurried down into the stable, saddled his mistress's horse, whose feet, at a single word from him, Catherine muffled with cloth.

"Where am I to go?" Laurence said to Marthe, whose look and voice impressed her by the inimitable accent of sincerity.

"Through the break in the ditch!" said she, urging on Laurence, "my brave man is there; you are going to learn the value of a Judas!"

Catherine quickly entered the salon, took the whip, gloves, hat and veil of her mistress and went out. This sudden appearance and action of Catherine were such a speaking commentary upon the words of the mayor, that Madame d'Hauteserre and the Abbé Goujet exchanged a look by which they communicated to each other this horrible thought:

"Adieu to all our happiness! Laurence is plotting treason, she has destroyed her cousins and the two D'Hauteserres."

"What do you mean?" asked Monsieur d'Hauteserre of Goulard.

"The château is surrounded, you are going to suffer a domiciliary visit. In short, if your sons are here, look to their safety, and that of the Simeuses."

"My sons!" exclaimed Madame d'Hauteserre, in astonishment.

"We have seen no one," said Monsieur d'Hauteserre.

"So much the better!" said Goulard. "But I esteem the families of Cinq-Cygne and Simeuse too much to see misfortune befall them. Listen to me attentively; if you have any papers which may compromise—"

"Papers?—" repeated the nobleman.

"Yes, if you have any, burn them," replied the mayor. "I am going to amuse the officers."

Goulard, who wished to run with the Royalist hare and hold with the Republican hounds, went out, and then the dogs commenced to bark violently.

"You have no longer any time; here they are," said the curate. "But who will warn the countess? where is she?"

"Catherine did not come and take her whip, gloves and hat to make relics of them," said Mademoiselle Goujet.

Goulard attempted to delay the two officers for a few minutes, by announcing to them the perfect ignorance of the inhabitants of the château de Cinq-Cygne.

"You do not know those people," said Peyrade, laughing in Goulard's face.

These two men so placidly sinister, then entered, followed by the corporal of gendarmes of Arcis and one of his men. This sight chilled with fright the four peaceful players of boston, who remained in their places, terrified by such a display of force. The noise made by a dozen gendarmes, whose

horses were pawing the ground, resounded on the lawn.

"Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne is the only one who is not present here," said Corentin.

"She is doubtless sleeping in her chamber," responded Monsieur d'Hauteserre.

"Come with me, ladies," said Corentin, hastening into the antechamber, and from there to the staircase, where Mademoiselle Goujet and Madame d'Hauteserre followed him.

"Count upon me!" resumed Corentin, whispering to the old lady. "I am one of you; I have already sent you the mayor. Place no confidence in my colleague and trust yourself to me; I will save you all."

"What is the matter?" asked Mademoiselle Goujet.

"It's a matter of life and death! do you not know it?" responded Corentin.

Madame d'Hauteserre fainted. To the great astonishment of Mademoiselle Goujet, and to the great disappointment of Corentin, Laurence's apartment was vacant. Sure that no one could escape from the park or château into the valley, all the outlets of which were guarded, Corentin made a gendarme go through every room, he gave orders to search the buildings, the stables, and went down to the salon, where Durieu, his wife and all the servants, in the most violent agitation, had already hastened. Peyrade was studying, with his little blue eye, every physiognomy; he remained cool and

calm in the midst of that disorder. When Corentin reappeared alone, for Mademoiselle Goujet was looking after Madame d'Hauteserre, they heard a noise of horses, with which was mingled the crying of a child. The horses entered by the small grating. In the midst of the general anxiety, a corporal of gendarmes appeared, pushing ahead of him Gothard, whose hands were tied, and Catherine, whom he brought before the officers.

"Here are prisoners," said he. "This little rogue was mounted and escaping."

"Fool!" whispered Corentin in the officer's ear, "why didn't you let him go? We should have learned something by following him."

Gothard had decided to burst into tears like an idiot. Catherine stood in an attitude of innocence and simplicity, which made the old officer reflect profoundly. The pupil of Lenoir, after having compared these two children with each other, after having scrutinized the artless mien of the old nobleman, whom he thought crafty, the spiritual curate, who was playing with the counters, the astonishment of all the servants and the Durieus, went to Corentin and whispered:

"We are not dealing with *flats*."

Corentin responded at first by a look, pointing out the card-table, and then he added:

"They were playing boston! the bed of the mistress of the house was being prepared, she has escaped, they were surprised, we are going to catch them."

A breach in a ditch has always its cause and its utility. This is how and why the one between the tower, now called *Mademoiselle's*, and the stables, had been made: When the goodman d'Hauteserre established himself at *Cinq-Cygne*, he made of a long ravine, through which the waters of the forest flowed into the ditch, a road which separates two large pieces of land belonging to the reserve of the *château*, but solely for the purpose of planting on it a hundred walnut trees, which he found in a nursery.

In eleven years, these walnut trees had become quite bushy and almost covered this road, already inclosed by banks six feet high, and by which was reached a small woodland of thirty acres, recently purchased. When the *château* was occupied by all its inhabitants, each of them preferred to go by way of the ditch in order to take the communal road, which ran along the park walls and led to the farm, rather than to go round by the grating. In going that way, they unintentionally enlarged the break on each side, with so much the less scruple, as in the nineteenth century, ditches are perfectly useless, and as the guardian often spoke of utilizing it. This constant demolition furnished earth, gravel, and stone which finally filled the bottom of the ditch. The water, arrested by this kind of causeway, covered it only during heavy rains. Notwithstanding this leveling in which everyone and the countess herself had taken part, the break was sufficiently abrupt to make it difficult for a horse to descend it, and especially so for him

to ascend it to the communal road; but it seems that in peril, horses understand the thought of their masters. While the countess was hesitating to follow Marthe and was asking of her an explanation, Michu, who from the top of his hillock had followed the lines described by the gendarmes, and learned the plan of the spies, despaired of success when he saw no one coming. A picket of gendarmes followed the wall of the park, stationing themselves at intervals, like sentinels, and leaving between each man a distance at which they could communicate with each other by voice and look, hear the least noise and see the smallest objects. Michu, lying flat, his ear against the ground, measured, like the Indians, the time left him, by the force of the sound.

"I have arrived too late!" said Michu to himself. "Violette shall pay for it. He took a long time to get drunk!—what's to be done?"

He heard the picket which came down from the forest pass before the grating, and which, by a manœuvre similar to that of the picket coming from the communal road, was going to make a junction with the latter.

"Still five or six minutes!" said he to himself.

At this moment the countess appeared, Michu caught her with a vigorous grasp and forced her into the covered road.

"Go straight ahead! Lead her," said he to his wife, "to where my horse stands, and bear in mind that gendarmes have ears."

On seeing Catherine, who carried the whip,

gloves and hat, but especially on seeing the mare and Gothard, this man of such quick perception in danger, resolved to trick the gendarmes as successfully as he had tricked Violette. Gothard had, as if by magic, forced the mare to climb the ditch.

"Cloth on the horse's feet!—I embrace you!" said the manager, clasping Gothard in his arms.

Michu let the mare go to her mistress, and took the gloves, hat and whip.

"You are intelligent, you will understand me," he resumed. "Force your horse to climb also over that road, ride him bareback, draw after you the gendarmes, go at full speed through the fields to the farm and gather up all that scattered picket," he added, completing his meaning by a gesture which indicated the route to be followed.

"You, my girl," said he to Catherine, "as other gendarmes are coming by the road which leads from Cinq-Cygne to Gondreville, follow quickly a direction contrary to that which Gothard is going to take, and gather them up from the château toward the forest. In short, act in such a way as to relieve us of annoyance in the deep road."

Catherine and the admirable child who was to give in this affair so many proofs of intelligence, executed their manœuvre in such a way as to make each line of gendarmes believe that their game was escaping; the uncertain light of the moon did not permit them to distinguish the stature, clothing, sex or number of those whom they were pursuing. They chased them in virtue of that famous axiom:

"It is necessary to arrest those who are escaping!" the folly of which, in the higher police sphere, had just been energetically demonstrated by Corentin to the corporal of the gendarmes. Michu, who had counted on the instinct of the gendarmes, was able to reach the forest shortly after the young countess, whom Marthe had guided to the place indicated.

"Run to the pavilion," said he to Marthe, "the forest will be guarded by the Parisians; it is dangerous to remain here. We shall, without doubt, have need of all our liberty."

Michu unhitched his horse and asked the countess to follow him.

"I will not go farther," said Laurence, "unless you give me an assurance of the interest you take in me, for, in a word, you are Michu—"

"Mademoiselle," he responded in a gentle voice, "my rôle will be explained to you in a few words. I am, without their knowing it, the guardian of the fortune of Messieurs de Simeuse. I received with respect to this, instructions from their deceased father and their dear mother, my protectress. Moreover, I have played the rôle of rabid Jacobin in order to serve my young masters; unfortunately, I commenced my game too late, and I was not able to save the old folks."

Here Michu's voice faltered.

"Since the flight of the young men, I have had conveyed to them sums of money, which were necessary for them to live honorably."

"Through the house of Breintmayer, of Strasbourg?" said she.

"Yes, mademoiselle, the correspondents of Monsieur Girel of Troyes, a Royalist, who, to save his fortune, has played, like me, the Jacobin. The paper, which your farmer picked up one evening on leaving Troyes, was relative to this business which might have compromised us: my life was no longer mine, but theirs, you understand? I have not been able to make myself master of Gondreville. In my position, they would have cut off my head, while asking where I had obtained so much gold. I preferred to buy back the estate a little later: but that scoundrel Marion was the agent of another scoundrel, Malin. Gondreville will return, all the same, to its masters. That is my concern. Four hours ago I had Malin at the end of my gun,—oh! he was a gone coon! Well! once dead, they will sell Gondreville at auction and you can buy it. In the event of my death, my wife would have given you a letter, which would have provided you with the means to do it. But this brigand told his crony Grévin, another rogue, that the Messieurs de Simeuse were conspiring against the First Consul, that they were in the country and that it would be better to give them up and to be rid of them, in order to be undisturbed at Gondreville. Now, as I had seen two skilled spies arrive, I uncocked my carbine and lost no time running here, thinking that you would know where and how to inform the young men—there."

"You deserve to be ennobled," said Laurence,

extending her hand to Michu, who wished to kneel and kiss that hand.

Laurence saw and stopped his movement, and said:

“Stand up, Michu!” in a tone of voice and with a look which made him at this moment, as happy as he had been miserable for twelve years.

“You reward me as if I had accomplished all I had to do,” said he. “Do you hear them, the hussars of the guillotine? Let us talk elsewhere.”

Michu took the mare’s bridle, placing himself on the side to which the countess’s back was turned, and said:

“Think of nothing but holding on well, whipping your beast and protecting your face from the lashing of the branches.”

He then directed the young girl for half an hour at a full gallop, turning and returning, cutting his own path through the glades in order to break the trail toward a spot where he halted.

“I no longer know where I am; I who know this forest as well as you do,” said the countess, looking around.

“We are in the very centre,” he replied. “We have two gendarmes after us, but we are safe.”

The picturesque spot to which the manager had led Laurence was to be so fatal to the principal personages in this drama and to Michu himself, that it becomes the duty of a historian to describe it. This landscape has, moreover, as we shall see, become celebrated in the judicial annals of the Empire.

The forest of Nodesme belonged to a monastery

called Notre-Dame. This monastery, taken, sacked and demolished, disappeared completely with monks and chattels. The forest, which was a coveted object, was included in the domain of the Comtes de Champagne, who afterward mortgaged and allowed it to be sold. In six centuries, nature covered the ruins with its rich and vigorous mantle of green and effaced them so completely, that the existence of one of the most beautiful convents was no longer indicated, save by a slight eminence, shaded by lofty trees, and surrounded with thick, impenetrable bushes, which, from 1794, Michu took pleasure in making denser by planting thorny acacia in the intervals destitute of shrubbery. A pond stood at the foot of this eminence and attested the existence of a lost spring, which without doubt, had formerly determined the location of the monastery. Only the possessor of the titles of the forest of Nodessme had been able to recognize the etymology of this word, eight hundred years old, and discover that there had formerly been a convent in the centre of the forest. On hearing the first thunder-claps of the Revolution, the Marquis de Simeuse, whom litigation had obliged to consult his title-deeds, informed of this detail by chance, began, with a reservation quite easy to understand, to look for the site of the monastery. The guard to whom the forest was so well known, had naturally aided his master in this work, and his sagacity as forester had enabled him to recognize the situation of the monastery. In observing the

direction of the five principal roads of the forest, several of which were effaced, he saw that they all terminated at the hillock and pond, to which people were formerly obliged to come from Troyes, from the valley of Arcis, from that of Cinq-Cygne, and from Bar-sur-Aube. The marquis wished to explore the hillock, but he could take for that work only men who were strangers to the country. Pressed by circumstances, he abandoned his searches, leaving on Michu's mind an impression that the eminence concealed either treasure or the foundations of the abbey. Michu continued this archæological work; he felt the earth sound hollow on an exact level with the pond, between two trees, at the foot of the only steep point of the eminence. One fine night he arrived with a pick and uncovered the arch of a cellar, the descent to which was by stone steps. The pond, whose greatest depth is three feet, forms a spatula, the handle of which seems to come out of the eminence, and would lead to the belief that there issues from this artificial rock, a spring, lost by infiltration into this vast forest. This marsh, surrounded with aquatic trees, willows, alders and ash-trees, is the point of junction of the paths, which are the remains of the old roads and forest alleys, now abandoned. This running but apparently stagnant water, covered with large-leaved plants and water-cresses, presents an entirely green surface, hardly distinguishable from its borders, on which grows fine and thick grass. It is so far from any habitation that no animal except the

deer goes to graze on it. Fully convinced that there could be nothing under this marsh, and repelled by the inaccessible sides of the hillock, the private guard or hunters had never visited, searched or sounded this corner, which belonged to the oldest felling ground in the wood, and which Michu reserved for big trees, when its turn arrived to be utilized. At the end of the cellar is a clean and wholesome vaulted cell, built of cut stone and like those called *in pace*, the dungeon of convents. The salubrity of this cell, the preservation of the remains of this staircase and of this arch, were explained by the spring, which the demolishers had spared, and by a wall, probably of great thickness, built of brick and cement, like that used by the Romans, which dammed in the upper water. Michu covered the entrance to this retreat with large stones; then in order to keep it a secret and to prevent any ingress, he made it a rule to ascend the wooded eminence and go down to the cellar by the bluff, instead of approaching it by the marsh. At the moment when these two fugitives arrived, the moon was shedding its beautiful, silvery light on the tops of the secular trees of the hillock, it was playing in the magnificent clusters of the tongues of woods, variously outlined by the roads which opened there, some rounded, others pointed, this one terminated by a single tree, that by a grove.

From there, the eye was irresistibly attracted by fleeting perspectives, in which the vision followed either the winding of a road or the sublime view of

a long alley of the forest, or a wall of verdure almost black. The light filtered through the boughs of this spot and made diamonds of this placid and unknown water sparkle in the open spaces between the lilies and the cresses. The croaking of the frogs broke the profound silence of this pretty corner of the forest, whose wild perfume awakened in the soul ideas of liberty.

"Are we perfectly safe?" said the countess to Michu.

"Yes, mademoiselle, but there is a task for each of us. Go and hitch our horses to trees at the top of that little hill and tie a handkerchief around the mouth of each," said he, handing her his cravat; "mine and yours are intelligent, they will know that they must keep quiet. When you have finished, come straight down to the water by that bluff, do not allow your riding-habit to catch, you will find me below."

While the countess was hiding and hitching the horses and tying up their mouths, Michu removed the stones and uncovered the entrance to the vault. The countess, who thought she knew her forest, was greatly astonished at seeing herself under the vault of a cellar. Michu replaced the stones in the form of an arch over the entrance, with the skill of a mason. When he had finished, the noise of horses and the voices of gendarmes resounded in the silence of the night, but he no less tranquilly struck a light and ignited a small branch of fir-tree and led the countess into the *in pace*, where he found a

candle-end which he had used in exploring this cellar. The iron door, several lines in thickness, perforated in some places by rust, had been repaired by the guard and was closed on the outside with bars, which fitted in holes on each side. The countess, overwhelmed with fatigue, sat down on a stone bench, over which still remained a ring, imbedded in the wall.

"We have a salon for conversation," said Michu. "The gendarmes can now move around as much as they wish, the worst that could happen would be the capture of our horses."

"The capture of our horses," said Laurence, "that would be to kill my cousins and the Messieurs d'Hauteserre!—Come, what do you know?"

Michu told the little which he had caught of the conversation between Malin and Grévin.

"They are on their way to Paris, which they will enter this morning," said the countess, when he had finished.

"Lost!" exclaimed Michu. "You understand that those entering and leaving Paris will be watched at the gates. Malin has the greatest interest in permitting my masters to compromise themselves in order to destroy them."

"And I, who know nothing of the general plan of the affair!" exclaimed Laurence. "How warn Georges, Rivière and Moreau? where are they? In short, let us think only of my cousins and the D'Hauteserres, bring them together at any cost."

"The telegraph outspeeds the fleetest horses,"

said Michu, "and of all the nobles steeped in this conspiracy, your cousins will be the most closely tracked. If I find them, we must lodge them here, we will keep them safely here until the affair is over; their poor father had, perhaps a vision when he put me on the track of this hiding-place: he had a presentiment that his sons would be saved in it."

"My mare comes from the stables of the Comte d'Artois, she was sired by his finest English horse; why, she has traveled thirty-six leagues, she would die rather than not carry you to the end," said the countess.

"Mine is a good one," said Michu, "and if you have made thirty-six leagues, I cannot have more than eighteen to make?"

"Twenty-three," said she, "since they are gone five hours. You will find them beyond Lagny, at Coupvrai, which they are going to leave at the break of day, disguised as bargemen; they expect to enter Paris by boat. Here is," said she, taking from her finger the half of her mother's wedding-ring, "the only thing in which they will have faith; I have given them the other half of it. The guard of Coupvrai, the father of one of their soldiers, conceals them to-night in a hut abandoned by charcoal men, in the middle of the woods. They number eight all told. The two D'Hautesserres and four men are with my cousins."

"Mademoiselle, they will not run after the soldiers, let us occupy ourselves with the Messieurs de

Simeuse only, and let the others save themselves as they please. Is it not enough to shout to them: 'Danger!' "

"Abandon the D'Hautesperres? Never!" said she. "They shall perish or be saved, all together!"

"Inferior noblemen?" rejoined Michu.

"They are but knights, I know it," she replied; "but they have allied themselves to the Cinq-Cygnés and the Simeuses. Bring back, then, my cousins and the D'Hautesperres, and consult them as to the best means of reaching this forest."

"The gendarmes are there! do you hear them? They are consulting with each other."

"Well, you have already been fortunate twice this evening, go! and bring them back and conceal them in this cellar, they will be secure from all search! I can be of no service," said she, in a rage, "I should be a beacon-light for the enemy. The police will never imagine that my relatives may return to the forest, when they see me composed. Moreover, the whole question consists in finding five good horses to make the distance from Lagny to our forest, five horses to be left dead in a thicket."

"And money!" responded Michu, who was reflecting profoundly while hearing the young countess.

"I gave my cousins a hundred louis to-night."

"I will answer for them," exclaimed Michu.

"Once concealed, you must give up seeing them; my wife or my boy will carry them their food twice a week. But as I cannot answer for myself, you should know, mademoiselle, in case of misfortune,

that the main beam of the loft of my pavilion has been bored with an auger. In the hole, which is stopped with a large plug, is the plan of a part of the forest. The trees on which you will see a red dot in the plan, have a black mark at the foot, on the ground. Each of these trees is an indicator. The third old oak, which is to the left of each indicator, conceals, two steps in advance of the trunk, rolls of tin buried seven feet deep, each of which contains a hundred thousand francs in gold. These eleven trees, there are only eleven of them, are the total fortune of the Simeuses, now that Gondreville has been taken from them."

"The nobility will be a hundred years recovering from the blows dealt them!" said Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, slowly.

"Is there any watchword?" asked Michu.

"*France* and *Charles!* for the soldiers: *Laurence* and *Louis!* for the D'Hauteserres and De Simeuses. My God! to have seen them yesterday for the first time in eleven years, and to know that they are in danger of death to-day, and what a death!"

"Michu," said she, with an expression of melancholy, "be as cautious for these fifteen hours as you have been grand and devoted during these twelve years. If misfortune fell on my cousins, I should die—No," said she, "I would live long enough to kill Bonaparte!"

"There will be two of us for that, the day when all will be lost."

Laurence took Michu's rough hand and shook it

vigorously *à l'anglaise*. Michu took out his watch; it was midnight.

"Let us go out, at every risk," said he. "Woe to the gendarme who blocks my way!—And you, without commanding you, Madame la Comtesse, return at full speed to Cinq-Cygne, they are there, amuse them."

The hole having been cleared away, Michu no longer heard anything; he put his ear to the ground and arose quickly. "They are on the verge of the forest toward Troyes," said he, "I shall get the better of them."

He assisted the countess to get out and replaced the pile of stones. When he had finished, he heard the gentle voice of Laurence, who wished to see him on his horse before mounting her own. This unpolished man had tears in his eyes, while exchanging a last look with his young mistress, whose eyes were dry.

"Amuse them, he is right!" she said to herself, when she no longer heard anything.

She started for Cinq-Cygne at full gallop.

Knowing that her sons were threatened with death, Madame d'Hauteserre, who did not think the Revolution over, and who knew the summary justice of the time, recovered her senses and strength through the very violence of the suffering which had deprived her of them. Led by intense curiosity, she went down to the salon, the aspect of which then presented a picture worthy of an artist's brush. Still seated at the card-table, the curate was mechanically playing with the counters, while

stealthily observing Peyrade and Corentin, who, standing at a corner of the fireplace, were talking in a low voice. Several times, the keen look of Corentin met the no less keen look of the curate; but like two adversaries who find themselves equally matched, and who resume their guard after having crossed swords, both promptly cast their glances in other directions. The amiable D'Hauteserre, planted on his two legs like a heron, remained by the side of the bulky, fat, tall and avaricious Goulard in the attitude which stupefaction had given him. Although he was clothed as a bourgeois, the mayor had always the air of a domestic. They both looked stupidly at the gendarmes, among whom Gothard, whose hands had been so tightly bound that they were blue and swollen, continued to cry. Catherine did not quit her position, full of simplicity and innocence, but impenetrable. The corporal, who according to Corentin, had just committed the folly of arresting these humble, good people, no longer knew whether he was to go or remain. He was absorbed in thought in the middle of the salon, his hand resting on the hilt of his sword and his eye on the two Parisians. The Durieus, who were stupefied, and all the servants of the château, formed an admirable group depicting anxiety. Except for the convulsive crying of Gothard, the flies moving in the air could have been heard.

When the mother, terrified and pale, opened the door, and showed herself almost dragged along by Mademoiselle Goujet, whose eyes were inflamed

with weeping, all those faces turned toward the two women. The hope of the officers to see Laurence enter was as great as the fear of the inhabitants of the château that she would do so. The spontaneous movement of the domestics and masters seemed caused, as it were, by one of those mechanisms which make figures in wood execute a single gesture or a winking of the eye.

Madame d'Hauteserre advanced with three quick strides toward Corentin and said to him in a broken, but vehement voice:

"For pity's sake, monsieur, of what are my sons accused? and do you believe that they are here?"

The curate, who, on seeing the old lady, seemed to say to himself: "She is going to commit some folly," lowered his eyes.

"My duties and the mission which I am accomplishing, do not permit me to inform you," responded Corentin, with an air at once gracious and bantering.

This refusal, which the detestable courtesy of this fop made still more implacable, petrified this aged mother, who fell into an armchair near the Abbé Goujet, clasped her hands and breathed a prayer.

"Where did you arrest this bawling child?" asked Corentin of the corporal, pointing out Laurence's little equerry.

"On the road which leads to the farm along the wall of the park. The rogue was about to reach the wood of Closeaux."

"And this girl?"

"Her? It was Olivier who arrested her."

"Where was she going?"

"Toward Gondreville."

"Were they going in different directions?"

"Yes," replied the gendarme.

"Are they not the servant-boy and waiting-maid of Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne?" said Corentin to the mayor.

"Yes," responded Goulard.

After having exchanged a few words in a whisper with Corentin, Peyrade went out directly, taking with him the gendarme.

At this moment, the corporal of gendarmerie of Arcis entered, went to Corentin and said in a low tone: "I know the surroundings well, I have searched all the buildings; unless the conspirators are buried, there is no one around. We have sounded the floors and walls with the butts of our muskets."

Peyrade, who returned, made a sign to Corentin to come and took him to see the break in the ditch, pointing out to him the deep road communicating with it.

"We have conjectured the manœuvre," said Peyrade.

"And I, I am going to tell it to you," replied Corentin. "The little rogue and the maid have put these imbecile gendarmes on the wrong scent, in order to assure the escape of the game."

"We shall know the truth only at daylight," replied Peyrade. "This road is soft, I have just had it barred above and below by two gendarmes."

When we are able to see clearly, we shall know by the footprints what animals have gone that way."

"Here are the marks of a horseshoe," said Corentin. "Come to the stables."

"How many horses are here?" asked Peyrade of Monsieur d'Hauteserre and Goulard, on returning to the salon with Corentin.

"Come, Monsieur le Maire, you know!" cried Corentin when he saw that functionary hesitating to reply.

"Why, there are the countess's mare, Gothard's horse and that of Monsieur d'Hauteserre."

"We saw only one in the stable," said Peyrade.

"Mademoiselle is taking a ride," said Durieu.

"Does your ward often ride on horseback at night?" said the libertine Peyrade to Monsieur d'Hauteserre.

"Very often," the good man replied with simplicity; "the mayor will bear witness to what I say."

"Everyone knows she is full of whims," added Catherine. "She was looking at the sky before going to bed, and I am sure that your bayonets, which were gleaming in the distance, puzzled her. She wished to know, she said on going out, if another revolution had occurred."

"When did she go out?" asked Peyrade.

"When she saw your muskets."

"And which way did she go?"

"I do not know."

"And the other horse?" asked Corentin,

"The gen—gendarmes, to—to—took it from me!" said Gothard.

"And where were you going?" said one of the gendarmes.

"I was fol—following my—my—my mistress to the far—farm."

The gendarme looked toward Corentin and awaited orders, but this language was, at the same time so false and so true, so profoundly innocent and so artful, that the two Parisians looked at each other as if repeating Peyrade's expression: "They are not *flats!*"

The nobleman did not appear to have wit enough to understand an epigram. The mayor was stupefied. The mother, weak by reason of her maternal relation, asked the officers stupid and witless questions. All the domestics had been completely surprised in their sleep. In presence of these trifling matters, in judging these various characters, Corentin saw at once that Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne was his only adversary. However skilful they may be, the police labor under innumerable disadvantages. They are not only obliged to learn all that the conspirator knows, but they must also conjecture a thousand things before arriving at one true one. The conspirator thinks constantly of his safety, while the police are on the alert only at certain hours. Were it not for treachery, nothing would be easier than to conspire. One conspirator alone has more skill than the police with their immense advantages. Feeling themselves arrested

morally, as if they had been stopped physically by a door which they expected to find open, after having picked the lock behind which men were passing in silence, Corentin and Peyrade saw themselves anticipated and frustrated without knowing by whom.

The corporal of Arcis came to them and whispered: "I assert positively, that if the De Simeuses and D'Hauterres have passed the night here, they have occupied the beds of the father, of the mother, of Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, of the waiting-maid, of the domestics, or they have wandered about the park, since there is not the least trace of their passage."

"Who, then, has been able to inform them?" said Corentin to Peyrade. "As yet, only the First Consul, Fouché, the ministers, the prefect of police and Malin know anything."

"We will leave *spies* in the country," whispered Peyrade to Corentin.

"You will do so much the better as they will be in Champagne," replied the curé, who could not help smiling on hearing the word *spies*, and who conjectured all from this singular word, which he overheard.

"God bless me!" thought Corentin, who replied to the curé with another smile, "there is only one intelligent man here. I can come to an understanding with him only. I am going to begin with him."

"Messieurs—" said the mayor, who wished to give a proof of his devotion to the First Consul, and who addressed himself to the two officers.

"Say *citizens*, the Republic still exists," replied Corentin, while looking at the curé with a bantering air.

"Citizens," replied the mayor, "at the time I entered this salon and before I had opened my mouth, Catherine rushed in and took the whip, gloves and hat of her mistress."

A dull murmur of horror came from the bottom of every breast but Gothard's. All eyes, except those of the gendarmes and officers, menaced Goulard, the informer, with violence.

"Good, citizen mayor," said Peyrade. "We now see through it clearly. They have informed the citizen Cinq-Cygne in good time," he added, looking at Corentin with visible distrust.

"Corporal, put the handcuffs on that little rogue," said Corentin to the gendarme, "and take him into a separate room. Confine also this little maid," he added, pointing out Catherine.

"You will direct the search for the papers," he resumed, addressing Peyrade, to whom he whispered: "Search everything, spare nothing.—Monsieur l'Abbé," said he confidentially to the curé, "I have important communications to make to you."

And he led him into the garden.

"Listen, Monsieur l'Abbé, you appear to me to have all the judgment of a bishop and,—no one can hear us,—you will understand me. By your agency only, I hope to save two families, which through folly, are going to allow themselves to fall into an abyss from which nothing returns. Messieurs de Simeuse and d'Hauteserre have been betrayed by one of those infamous spies whom the government slips into every conspiracy, in order to know its

object, its means and its members. Do not confound me with this miserable fellow who accompanies me, he is of the police; but I, I am very honorably attached to the consular cabinet, and my word is final there. They do not intend the ruin of the two Simeuses; and although Malin would wish to see them shot, the First Consul, if they are here and have no bad intentions, would like to stop them on the brink of the precipice, for he likes good soldiers. The officer who accompanies me has all the power; I, I am nothing, apparently, but I know where the plot lies. The officer has the cue from Malin, who, without doubt, has promised him his support, a place and perhaps money, if he can find the two Simeuses and deliver them up. The First Consul, who is a truly great man, does not favor covetous designs. I do not wish to know whether the two young men are here or not," said he, on observing a gesture by the abbé, "but they can be saved in one way only. You know the law of the 6 Floreal, year X., it grants an amnesty to the *émigrés* who are still in foreign countries, on the condition that they return before the first Vendémiaire of the year XI., that is to say, in September of last year; but the two Simeuses, as well as the Messieurs D'Hauteserre, having held commands in the army of Condé, come within the exception mentioned in that law; their presence in France is then a crime and suffices, under the present circumstances, to render them accomplices in a horrible plot. The First Consul has felt the defect of this exception, which makes

irreconcilable enemies to his government; he would like to make it known to the two Simeuses that no prosecution will be directed against them, if they address to him a petition, in which they will state that they return to France with an intention of submitting to the laws and promise to take an oath to support the Constitution. You understand that this document must be in his hands before their arrest and dated some days past; I can be the bearer of it—I do not ask you where the young men are,” said he, seeing the curé make another gesture of denial; “we are unfortunately sure of finding them; the forest is guarded, the entrances to Paris are watched, and the frontier also. Listen to me attentively; if these noblemen are anywhere between this forest and Paris, they will be taken; if they are in Paris, they will be found there; if they turn back, the unfortunate men will be arrested. The First Consul likes the former nobility and cannot endure the Republicans, and this is very plain: if he wishes a throne, he must throttle liberty. Let this secret remain with us. So, look to it! I will wait until to-morrow, I will shut my eyes; but have no confidence in my companion; that accused Provençal is the servant of the devil; he has his orders from Fouché, as I have mine from the First Consul.”

“If the two Simeuses are here,” said the curé, “I would give ten pints of blood and an arm to save them; but if Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne is their confidante, she has not committed, I swear it by my eternal salvation, the least indiscretion and has

not done me the honor of consulting me. I am very well satisfied with her discretion, if, however, it is a case of discretion. We played boston yesterday evening, as we do every day, in the most profound silence until half-past ten, and we saw and heard nothing. A child passing along this solitary road would be seen and the fact known to everyone, and for the last fifteen days no stranger has been in this neighborhood. Now Messieurs d'Hauteserre and De Simeuse make a troop of four. The good man and his wife have submitted to the government and have made every imaginable effort to bring back their sons; they even wrote to them the day before yesterday. Moreover, on my soul and conscience, your descent here has been necessary to shake the firm belief which I entertain, that they are sojourning in Germany. Between us, there is no one here, except the young countess, who does not render justice to the eminent qualities of the First Consul."

"Sly dog!" thought Corentin. "If these young men be shot, it will be because you have wished it!" he responded in a loud voice; "now I wash my hands of it."

He had led the Abbé Goujet to a place brilliantly lighted by the moon, and he looked at him suddenly, while uttering these fatal words. The priest was greatly grieved, but as a man who was surprised and completely ignorant.

"Understand, then, Monsieur l'Abbé Goujet," resumed Corentin, "that their right to the estate of Gondreville renders them doubly criminal in the

eyes of subordinates! In short, I wish them to have relations with God and not with His saints."

"There is, then, a conspiracy?" innocently asked the curé.

"Ignoble, odious, cowardly and so contrary to the generous spirit of the nation," replied Corentin, "that it will be covered with general opprobrium."

"Well! Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne is incapable of a cowardly act," exclaimed the curé.

"Monsieur l'Abbé," replied Corentin, "hold, we have—between you and me—clear proof of her complicity, but it is not sufficiently strong for the ends of justice. She fled at our approach—And yet, I had sent you the mayor."

"Yes, but for an individual who was so much interested in saving them, you followed a little too closely on the heels of the mayor," said the abbé.

At this remark, these two men looked at each other, and no more was said between them; they were of that class of profound anatomists of thought for whom a simple inflection of the voice, or a look, or a word, is sufficient to divine a soul, just as the savage knows his enemies by indications which are invisible to the eye of the European.

"I expected to draw something from him; I have betrayed myself," thought Corentin.

"Ah! the knave!" the curé said to himself.

*

The old clock of the church struck twelve at the moment Corentin and the curé returned to the salon. The gendarmes were heard opening and closing the doors of the rooms and closets. They were examining the beds. Peyrade, with the prompt intelligence of the spy, was searching and sounding everything. This pillage excited at once the fear and indignation of the faithful servants, still standing motionless. Monsieur d'Hauteserre was exchanging compassionate looks with his wife and Mademoiselle Goujet. A horrible curiosity kept everyone awake. Peyrade came down to the salon, holding in his hand a casket in carved sandal-wood, which the Admiral de Simeuse must have brought from China. This handsome box was flat and of the dimension of a quarto volume.

Peyrade made a sign to Corentin and led him into the embrasure of the window.

"I have it!" he said to him. "That Michu, who was able to pay eight hundred thousand francs in Gondreville gold to Marion, and who just now intended to kill Malin, must be the agent of the Simeuses; the interest which made him threaten Marion must be the same that made him point his carbine at Malin. He appears to me capable of having ideas, he has had but one, he is informed of the matter and has been here to forewarn them."

(183)

"Malin has spoken of the conspiracy to his friend, the notary," said Corentin, continuing the inductions of his colleague, "and Michu, who was in ambush, has, without doubt, heard them speak of the Simeuses. In fact, he was obliged to defer his shot in order to prevent a misfortune which seemed to him greater than the loss of Gondreville."

"He had certainly recognized us for what we are," said Peyrade. "So, at the moment, the intelligence of that peasant appeared to me to be prodigious."

"Oh! that proves that he was on his guard," responded Corentin. "But after all, my old fellow, don't let us deceive ourselves; treason is offensively odorous, and primitive people smell it from afar."

"We are the stronger for it," said the Provençal.

"Go for the corporal of Arcis," shouted Corentin to one of the gendarmes. "Let us send to his pavilion," said he to Peyrade.

"Violette, our ear, is there," said the Provençal.

"We started out without any news from him," said Corentin. "We should have brought Sabatier with us. Two are not sufficient.—Corporal," said he, as he saw the gendarme enter, and after placing him between Peyrade and himself, "do not allow yourself to be out-generaled as the corporal of Troyes did just now. Michu appears to be in the affair; go to his pavilion, keep your eye on everything, and give us an account of it."

"One of my men heard horses in the forest at the moment they arrested the little domestics, and I have four intrepid fellows on the heels of those who

wish to conceal themselves there," responded the gendarme.

He went out; the noise of the galloping of his horse which resounded on the paved walk of the lawn, diminished rapidly.

"Well! they are on their way to Paris or are moving backward toward Germany," Corentin said to himself. He sat down, drew from the pocket of his spencer a notebook, wrote two orders with a pencil, sealed them and beckoned to one of the gendarmes to come.

"At full gallop to Troyes, awaken the prefect and tell him to put the telegraph in operation at the break of day."

The gendarme started at a full gallop. The meaning of this movement and Corentin's intention were so clear that all the inhabitants of Cinq-Cygne were depressed; but this new trouble was, in a measure, an additional scourge in their martyrdom, for at that moment they had their eyes on the precious casket. While conversing, the two officers were watching the language of those flaming looks. A sort of cold rage agitated the insensible hearts of the two beings who shared in the general terror. The police officer has all the emotions of the hunter; but, while one exerts the powers of the mind and body in hunting and killing a hare, a partridge or a deer, the other seeks the safety of the State or prince in view of a large recompense. Thus the chase after men is superior to the other chase, by the whole distance which exists between men

and animals. Moreover, the spy is required to elevate his rôle to the grandeur and importance of the interests to which he devotes himself. Without engaging in this calling, each one can then conceive that the soul expends in it as much passion as the hunter does in the pursuit of game. So the more they advanced toward the end to be accomplished, the more ardent these two men became; but their countenances and eyes remained calm and cold, just as their suspicions, ideas and plans remained impenetrable. But for him who might have followed the effects of the moral scent of these two bloodhounds on the trail of unknown and hidden facts, for him who might have understood the movements of canine agility, which enabled them to find the truth by a rapid weighing of probabilities, there was something at which to shudder. How and why were these men of genius so low, when they could have been so high? What imperfection, what vice, what passion thus debased them? Are men officers of police, as men are thinkers, writers, statesmen, painters or generals, upon the condition of being able to do nothing but spy, as the latter discourse, write, govern, paint or fight? The domestics of the château had in their hearts but one wish: "Will not a thunderbolt fall on these infamous men?" They all thirsted for vengeance. Moreover, without the presence of the gendarmes there would have been a revolt.

"Has anyone the key of the box?" asked the cynical Peyrade, interrogating the assemblage as

much by the movement of his large red nose as by his voice.

The Provençal remarked, not without an impulse of fear, that no gendarmes were about. Corentin and he found themselves alone. Corentin took from his pocket a small poniard and forced it into the chink of the box. At that time, they heard, at first on the road, then on the narrow pavement of the lawn, the dread noise of a reckless gallop; but what caused much more fright was the fall and gasping of the horse, which suddenly fell bodily at the foot of the middle tower. A shock similar to that which a thunderbolt causes, agitated all the spectators when they saw Laurence, whom the rustling of her riding-habit had announced; her domestics had promptly placed themselves in line in order to let her pass. Notwithstanding the rapidity of her traveling, she had felt the trouble which the discovery of the conspiracy was to cause her: all her hopes gone! she had galloped among ruins, thinking of the necessity of submission to the consular government. Moreover, without the danger which the four noblemen were running, and which was the stimulant by the aid of which she overcame her fatigue and despair, she would have fainted. She had almost killed her mare in coming to place herself between her cousins and death. On seeing this heroic girl, pale and with drawn features, her veil on one side, her whip in her hand, on the sill from which her glowing gaze embraced and fathomed the whole scene, everyone understood

by the imperceptible movement which acted upon the churlish and troubled face of Corentin, that two veritable adversaries were in presence of each other. A terrible duel was going to commence. On seeing the casket in Corentin's hands, the young countess raised her whip and sprang on him so quickly, and gave him so violent a stroke on the hand that the casket fell on the floor; she seized it, threw it into the midst of the embers and placed herself before the fireplace in a threatening attitude, before the two officers had recovered from their surprise. Scorn flamed in her eyes, her pale forehead and disdainful lips were more insulting to these men than the autocratic gesture by which she had treated Corentin like a venomous beast. The good man D'Hautesserre felt himself a knight, his face was blood-red and he regretted that he had not a sword. The servants at once leaped for joy. This vengeance, so greatly provoked, fell on one of these men like a thunderbolt. But their exultation was forced back into the depths of their souls by a terrible fear; they still heard the gendarmes moving about in the lofts. The *spy*,—energetic substantive, in which are confounded all the shades which distinguish the police authorities, for the public has never been willing to specify in language the diverse characters of those who are mingled together in this pharmacy which is necessary to governments,—the spy, then, has this great and curious quality, he is never angered; he has the Christian humility of the priest, his eyes are inured to contempt, which he

opposes on his side, as a barrier against foolish people who do not understand him; he has a front of brass, which is proof against insult, he travels on to his goal like an animal whose solid shell can be penetrated by cannon only; but, like the animal also, he is so much the more furious when he is wounded, because he believed his armor impenetrable. The stroke of the whip over the fingers was for Corentin, save the pain, the cannon-shot which perforates the shell. This action, full of disgust on the part of this sublime and noble girl, humiliated him not only in the presence of that small company, but also in his own eyes. Peyrade, the Provençal, sprang toward the fireplace, he received a kick from Laurence; but he caught her foot, raised it and forced her for decency's sake, to throw herself into the large chair, in which she had been lately sleeping. This was burlesque in the midst of terror, a frequent contrast in human affairs. Peyrade scorched his hand in recovering the burning casket; but he had it, he placed it on the floor and sat upon it. These little incidents passed rapidly, without a word. Corentin, relieved of the pain caused by the stroke of the whip, held Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne by the hands.

"Do not compel me, *fair citizen*, to employ force against you," said he with his withering courtesy.

Peyrade's action had resulted in extinguishing the fire by a compression which stifled the air.

"Gendarmes!" he cried, retaining his odd position.

"Do you promise to be reasonable?" said Corentin insolently to Laurence, while picking up his poniard and without committing the fault of threatening her with it.

"The secrets of that casket do not concern the government," she responded, with a mixture of melancholy in her look and accent. "When you shall have read the letters which are in it, you will, notwithstanding your infamy, be ashamed of having read them—but are you ashamed of anything?" she asked him after a pause.

The curé looked at Laurence as if to say: "In the name of God, be calm."

Peyrade arose. The bottom of the casket having been in contact with the coals and almost entirely consumed, left on the carpet a scorched impression. The lid was charred, the sides parted. This grotesque Scævola who had just offered to the god of the police, out of fear, the seat of his apricot breeches, opened the two sides of the box, as if it had been a book, and let fall on the cloth of the card-table, three letters and two locks of hair. He was going to smile on looking at Corentin, when he saw that the hair was of two different shades of white. Corentin left Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne in order to read the letter from which the hair had fallen. Laurence also arose, placed herself near the two spies and said:

"Oh! read aloud, it will be your punishment."

As they were reading with the eye only, she herself read the following letter:

"DEAR LAURENCE,

"We have learned of your admirable conduct on the sad day of our arrest, my husband and myself. We know that you love our dear twins as much as we ourselves do; it is you, moreover, whom we charge with a trust, at once precious and sad for them. The executioner has just cut off our hair, for we are going to die in a few moments, and he has promised us to hand you the only two souvenirs which it is possible for us to give to our beloved orphans. Preserve for them these relics of ourselves, and deliver them in better times. We have impressed there a last kiss for them, with our blessing. Our last thought will be for our sons, then for you, and finally for God! Be affectionate and kind to them.

"BERTHE DE CINQ-CYGNE.

"JEAN DE SIMEUSE."

The eyes of all were suffused with tears by the reading of this letter.

Laurence said to the two officers, in a firm voice, casting on them a petrifying look:

"You have less pity than *the Public Executioner*."

Corentin quietly put the hair in the letter and the letter aside on the table, placing on it a basket full of counters to prevent its flying off. This coolness in the midst of the general emotion was horrible. Peyrade unfolded the other two letters.

"Oh! as to these," said Laurence, "they are about the same. You have heard the testament, here is the execution of it. Henceforth, my heart will have no secrets for anyone, that is all."

"1794, ANDERNACH, before the combat.

"MY DEAR LAURENCE,

"I love you for life and I wish you to know it formally; but in case I should die, understand that my brother Paul-Marie loves you as much as I, myself, do. My only consolation in dying will be an assurance that you will one day be able to make my brother your husband, without seeing me die of jealousy, as that would certainly occur, if, both living, you should prefer him to me. After all, this preference would appear to me very natural, for, perhaps, he is better than I—, etc.

"MARIE-PAUL."

"Here is the other," said she, with a charming blush on her face.

"ANDERNACH, before the combat.

"MY GOOD LAURENCE,

"There is a vein of sadness in my soul; but Marie-Paul has too much gaiety in his character, not to please you much more than I do. It will be necessary some day to choose between us; well, although I love you with a passion—"

"You corresponded with *émigrés*, said Peyrade, interrupting Laurence and putting the letters, by way of precaution, between him and the light, in order to ascertain whether or not they contained between the lines writing in sympathetic ink.

"Yes," said Laurence, who folded the precious letters, the paper of which had become yellow. "But in virtue of what right do you thus violate my domicile, my personal liberty and every domestic virtue?"

"Ah! indeed!" said Peyrade. "By what right? I must tell you that, fair aristocrat," he replied,

Copyrighted 1887 by G. B. & Son



P. Vidal del. & sculp.

Indicate
the
place
of
the
original
drawing.

1887

Copyrighted 1897 by G. W. & L.



drawing from his pocket an order emanating from the Minister of Justice and countersigned by the Minister of the Interior. "Wait a moment, citizen, the ministers have assumed the responsibility—"

"We could ask you," whispered Corentin to her, "by what right you harbor in your house the assassins of the First Consul? You have given me a lash over the fingers, which would some day justify me in lending a hand to dispatch your cousins, I who came to save them—"

By the mere movement of the lips and by the look which Laurence gave Corentin, the curé understood what this great and unknown artist was saying, and made a sign of distrust to the countess, which was seen by Goulard only. Peyrade gave a few light taps on the lid of the box, in order to find out if it was not made of two hollow pieces of wood.

"Oh! *mon Dieu!*" said Laurence to Peyrade, snatching from him the lid, "do not break it—wait."

She took a pin, pressed the head of a figure, and the two pieces, driven by a spring, separated and that which was hollow, presented the two miniatures of Messieurs de Simeuse in the uniform of Condé's army, two portraits painted on ivory in Germany. Corentin, who was face to face with an adversary worthy of all his wrath, called Peyrade by a gesture into a corner and conferred privately with him.

"You threw that in the fire!" said the Abbé Goujet to Laurence, pointing out to her by a look the letter of the marquise and the hair.

Her only reply was a significant shrug of the shoulders. The curé understood that she was sacrificing all in order to amuse the spies and gain time, and he raised his eyes to heaven in a gesture of admiration.

"Where, then, did they arrest Gothard, whom I hear crying?" said she to him, loud enough to be heard.

"I do not know," said the curé.

"Had he gone to the farm?"

"The farm!" said Peyrade to Corentin. "Let us send there some of the men."

"No," replied Corentin, "that girl has not confided the safety of her cousins to a farmer. She is trifling with us.—Do what I tell you in order that after having committed the error of coming here, we may carry away at least something definite."

Corentin went and placed himself before the fireplace, lifted the long, pointed skirts of his coat to warm himself, and assumed the air, tone and manner of a man who is on a visit.

"Mesdames, you may retire for the night, and your domestics also. Monsieur le Maire, your services are no longer necessary. The strictness of our order does not permit us to act otherwise than we have just done; but when all the walls, which appear to be very thick, have been examined, we shall depart."

The mayor bowed to the company and withdrew. Neither the curé nor Mademoiselle Goujet budged. The domestics were too uneasy not to follow the

destiny of their young mistress. Madame d'Hauteserre, who since the arrival of Laurence, was studying her with the curiosity of a mother in despair, arose, took her by the arm, led her into a corner and said in a low voice:

"Have you seen them?"

"How could I have allowed your boys to come under our roof without your knowing it?" responded Laurence. "Durieu," said she, "see if it is possible to save my poor Stella, who is still breathing."

"She has gone a long distance?" said Corentin.

"Fifteen leagues in three hours," she responded to the curé, who contemplated her in amazement. "I left at half-past nine and returned fully an hour ago."

She looked at the clock, which marked half-past two.

"So," resumed Corentin, "you do not deny having made a journey of fifteen leagues?"

"No," said she, "I admit that my cousins and Messieurs de Simeuse, in their perfect innocence, thought of asking not to be excepted from the amnesty and were returning to Cinq-Cygne. Moreover, when I had reason to believe that Monsieur Malin intended to envelop them in some treason, I went to warn them to return to Germany, where they will be before the telegraph from Troyes has located them on the frontier. If I have committed a crime, they will punish me for it."

This reply, profoundly meditated by Laurence, and so probable in all its bearings, shook the conviction of Corentin, whom the young countess

observed from the corner of her eye. At this decisive moment, and when every soul was, in a manner, hanging on these two faces, when every look went from Corentin to Laurence and from Laurence to Corentin, the noise of a horse at a gallop, coming from the forest, resounded on the road, and from the grating, on the pavement of the lawn. A frightful anxiety was pictured on every face.

Peyrade entered, his eye sparkling with joy; he hastened to his colleague and said, loud enough to be heard by the countess:

“We have Michu.”

Laurence, to whose cheeks anguish, fatigue and the tension of all her intellectual powers gave a rosy color, became pale and fell, thunderstruck, almost fainting, into an armchair. Durieu’s wife, Made-moiselle Goujet and Madame d’Hauteserre hastened to her, for she was suffocating; she directed them by a gesture to cut the frogs of her riding-habit.

“She has fallen into the snare,—*they* are on their way to Paris!” said Corentin to Peyrade. “Let us change the orders.”

They withdrew, leaving a gendarme at the door of the salon. The infernal address of these two men had just gained a horrible advantage in this duel in catching Laurence in a trap by one of their customary tricks.

At six o’clock in the morning, at daybreak, the two officers returned. After having explored the deep road, they assured themselves that the horses had passed over it in order to reach the forest.

They awaited the report of the captain of gendarmery, charged with reconnoitring the country. On quitting the château, which was surrounded, and under the control of a corporal, they went to breakfast at the house of a tavern-keeper in Cinq-Cygne, but only after having given an order to release Gothard, who had not ceased to respond to every question by torrents of tears, and Catherine, who remained in silent immobility. Catherine and Gothard came to the salon and kissed the hands of Laurence, who was lying stretched out in a large armchair. Durieu came to announce that Stella would not die, but that she required very great care.

The mayor, uneasy and curious, met Peyrade and Corentin in the village. He was unwilling to allow superior employés of the government to breakfast in a wretched tavern, he took them to his home. The abbey was a quarter of a league away. While walking along, Peyrade remarked that the corporal of Arcis had sent no news of Michu or Violette. "We are dealing with people of quality," said Corentin; "they are stronger than we are. The priest, without doubt, counts for something in the matter."

At the moment when Madame Goulard led the two officers into a large dining-room, without fire, the lieutenant of gendarmery arrived, looking quite alarmed.

"We have found the horse of the corporal of Arcis in the forest without his rider," said he to Peyrade.

"Lieutenant," shouted Corentin, "run to Michu's pavilion; learn what is going on there! They have killed the corporal."

This news was damaging to the mayor's breakfast. The Parisians swallowed everything with the rapidity of hunters eating on a halt, and returned to the château in their basket-carriage, drawn by a post-horse, in order to be able to go rapidly to the different points where their presence might be necessary. When these two men reappeared in the salon into which they had brought trouble, fright, suffering and the most painful anxieties, they found Laurence there in a morning-gown, with the nobleman and his wife, the Abbé Goujet and his sister, grouped around the fire and apparently tranquil.

"If they had Michu," said Laurence to herself, "they would have brought him. I regret not having been mistress of myself and having partially contributed to verify the suspicions of these wretches; but all can be repaired—Shall we be your prisoners for a long time?" she asked the two officers in a bantering and flippant way.

"How can she know anything of our anxiety about Michu? No one has entered the château from without. She is making sport of us!" said the two spies to each other by a look.

"We will not importune you much longer," replied Corentin; "three hours from now we shall offer our regrets for having disturbed your solitude."

No one replied. This contemptuous silence

redoubled the internal rage of Corentin, concerning whom Laurence and the curé, the two intellects of this little society, had exchanged impressions. Gothard and Catherine spread the table near the fire for breakfast, of which the curé and his sister partook. Neither the master nor the domestics gave any attention to the two spies, who walked about in the garden, in the courtyard and on the road, and returned now and then to the salon.

At half-past two, the lieutenant reappeared.

"I have found the corporal," said he to Corentin, "lying on the road leading from the pavilion called Cinq-Cygne to the farm of Bellache, with no other injury than a horrible contusion on the head, and probably caused by the fall. He was, he said, swept so rapidly from his horse and thrown so violently backward, that he cannot explain how it occurred; his feet left the stirrup, otherwise he would have been killed, his horse, affrighted, would have dragged him across the country; we have confided him to Michu and Violette—"

"What! Michu is at his pavilion?" said Corentin, who observed Laurence.

The countess smiled slyly, like a woman who was taking her revenge.

"I have just seen him concluding a bargain with Violette, which they commenced yesterday evening," replied the lieutenant. "Violette and Michu appeared to be drunk; but that is not astonishing, they drank all night and they have not yet agreed."

"Violette told you that?" exclaimed Corentin.

"Yes," said the lieutenant.

"Ah! everything must be done by one's self!" exclaimed Peyrade, looking at Corentin, who was as doubtful as Peyrade of the lieutenant's intelligence.

The young man replied to the old one by a nod of the head.

"At what hour did you arrive at Michu's pavilion?" said Corentin, who noticed that Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne had looked at the clock on the mantel-piece.

"About two o'clock," said the lieutenant.

Laurence embraced with the same look Monsieur and Madame d'Hautesserre, the Abbé Goujet and his sister, who believed themselves under a mantle of azure; the joy of triumph sparkled in her eyes, she colored up and tears started from her eyelids. Strong against the greatest misfortune, this young girl could shed tears only through pleasure. At this moment she was sublime, especially for the curé, who almost grieved at Laurence's masculine character, in which he then perceived the excessive tenderness of the woman; but this sensibility in her case was like a treasure hidden at an infinite depth under a block of granite.

At this moment, a gendarme came to ask if he could allow Michu's son to enter, as he wanted to speak to the gentlemen from Paris. Corentin replied by an affirmative nod. François Michu, the cunning little dog, a chip of the old block, was in the courtyard where Gothard, set free, was able to talk to him for a moment under the eyes of the

gendarme. Little Michu discharged his errand by slipping something into Gothard's hand which was not seen by the gendarme. Gothard stole behind François and reached Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, to whom he innocently gave her her entire wedding-ring, which she kissed very ardently, for she understood that Michu meant, in thus sending it to her, that the four noblemen were safe.

"M' pa wishes to know where he shall put the corporal, who is not at all well?"

"Of what does he complain?" said Peyrade.

"Of his head, he struck the ground hard, all the same. For a gendarme who knew how to ride, it is hard luck, but he stumbled! There is a hole, oh! as big as your fist, behind his head. 'Pears, he 'scaped falling on an ugly stone. Poor man! being a gendarme didn't save him, he is suffering all the same, what a pity!"

The captain of gendarmery of Troyes entered the courtyard, dismounted, motioned to Corentin, who, on recognizing him, hastened to the window and opened it in order to lose no time.

"What's the matter?"

"We have been brought back like a lot of Hollanders. We found five horses dead of fatigue, their coats bristling with sweat, in the very middle of the broad avenue of the forest; I have kept them in order to know whence they came and who furnished them. The forest is surrounded, those who are there will not be able to get out."

"At what hour do you think these troopers entered the forest?"

"At half-past twelve, in the daytime."

"Don't let a hare go out of that forest without your seeing it," Corentin whispered to him. "I'll leave you here, Peyrade, I am going to see the poor corporal. Stay at the mayor's house, I will send a skilful man to relieve you," whispered Corentin to the Provençal. "It will be necessary to avail ourselves of the services of the natives; examine every face in the country."

He turned toward the company and said: "*Au revoir!*" in an alarming tone of voice.

No one bowed to the officers, who withdrew.

"What will Fouché say of a domiciliary visit without result?" exclaimed Peyrade, when he helped Corentin into his wicker-gig.

"Oh! it's not all ended," whispered Corentin to Peyrade; "the noblemen must be in the forest."

He pointed out Laurence, who was looking at them through the small panes of the large windows of the salon.

"I have crushed one who was her equal and who provoked my wrath! If she fall again into my hands, I will pay her for her lash."

"The other was an unfortunate girl," said Peyrade, "and that one there is in a position—"

"Do I make any distinction? All is fish in the sea!" said Corentin, motioning to the gendarme, who struck the post-horse and drove off.

Ten minutes after, the château de Cinq-Cygne was completely evacuated.

"How did they get rid of the corporal?" said Laurence to François Michu, whom she had made sit down and to whom she served lunch.

"My father and mother told me that it was a question of life or death, that no one was to enter our house. Then I understood by the movement of the horses in the forest, that I had to deal with dogs of gendarmes, and I wished to prevent their entering our house. I took strong ropes, which we have in our loft, I tied them to the trees at the outlet of each road. Then I drew the rope to the height of a trooper's breast and coiled it around the tree on the opposite side of the road, on which I heard the galloping of a horse. The road was obstructed. It did its work. There was no moon; my corporal struck the ground, but he was not killed. How can it be helped! They have a hard life of it, the gendarmes! after all, we do what we can."

"You have saved us!" said Laurence, embracing François, whom she led back to the grating.

There, seeing no one, she whispered to him:

"Have they any provisions?"

"I have just delivered to them a twelve-pound loaf and four bottles of wine. They will remain quiet for six days."

On returning to the salon, the young girl saw herself the object of the silent interrogations of Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre, of the Abbé

Goujet and his sister, who observed her with as much admiration as anxiety.

"But you have again seen them?" exclaimed Madame d'Hauteserre.

The countess, smiling, put her finger on her lips and retired to her room to sleep, for once the triumph won, her fatigue overwhelmed her.

The shortest road to go from Cinq-Cygne to Michu's pavilion was that which led from that village to the farm of Bellache, and which terminated at the round-point, where the spies had appeared to Michu on the evening before. The gendarme who drove Corentin had also followed that route which the corporal from Arcis had taken. While going along, Corentin was trying to discover the means by which a gendarme could have been unhorsed. He blamed himself for having sent to so important a point but one man, and he derived from this mistake an axiom for a police code, which he applied to his own use. "If they have got rid of the gendarme," thought he, "they have also got rid of Violette. The five dead horses have evidently brought back to the forest, from the environs of Paris, the four conspirators and Michu. Has Michu a horse?" said he to the gendarme, who belonged to the brigade of Arcis.

"Ah! and a famous nag," replied the gendarme, "a hunter that comes from the stables of the former Marquis de Simeuse. Although he is fifteen years old, he is the better for it. Michu has made him travel twenty leagues, the animal's coat is as dry as

my chapeau. Oh! he takes great care of him, he has refused money for him."

"What is his description?"

"His coat is brown, verging on black, he has white spots above the hoofs, is lean, all nerve, like an Arabian horse."

"You have then seen Arabian horses?"

"A year ago, I returned from Egypt, I have ridden Mamelukes' horses, I served eleven years in the cavalry, I crossed the Rhine with General Steingel, from there I went to Italy, and I followed the First Consul into Egypt. Besides, I am going to be made corporal."

"When I arrive at Michu's pavilion, go to the stable, and if you have lived eleven years among horses, you ought to be able to know when a horse has been running."

"See, there is where our corporal was unhorsed," said the gendarme, pointing out the place where the road ran into the round-point.

"Tell the captain to come and take me to that pavilion, we shall go together to Troyes."

Corentin alighted and stood a few moments observing the ground. He examined the two elms which faced each other, one against the wall of the park, the other on the slope of the round-point, which the parish road crossed; then he saw what no one had been able to see, a uniform button in the dust of the road, and he picked it up. On entering the pavilion, he saw Violette and Michu sitting at a table in the kitchen, still disputing.

Violette arose, greeted Corentin and offered him something to drink.

"Thank you—I would like to see the corporal," said the young man, who, at a glance, divined that Violette had been drunk more than twelve hours.

"My wife is looking after him upstairs," said Michu.

"Well, corporal, how are you getting along?" said Corentin, who hastened to the stairway and found the gendarme with his head bandaged and lying on Madame Michu's bed.

His chapeau, sabre and cross-belts were on a chair. Marthe, true to her womanly feelings, and having no knowledge, moreover, of her son's prowess, was nursing the corporal in company with her mother.

"We are waiting for Monsieur Varlet, the doctor from Arcis," said Madame Michu; "Gaucher has gone for him."

"Leave us for a moment," said Corentin, quite surprised at this sight, in which the innocence of the women was manifest.

"Where were you struck?" asked he, looking at the uniform.

"In the breast," replied the corporal.

"Let me see your cross-belts!" said Corentin.

On the yellow band, with a narrow white edging, which a recent law had given to the gendarmery, called *national*, in stipulating the smallest details of its uniform, was a plate quite similar to the present plate of the rural guard, and on which the law had

required these singular words to be engraved: *Respect for person and property!* The rope had necessarily struck the cross-belts and deeply blackened them. Corentin took the coat and examined the place where the button, found on the road, belonged.

"At what hour were you picked up?" said Corentin.

"Why, at the break of day."

"Did they bring you straight here?" said Corentin, observing the state of the bed, which was still unmade.

"Yes."

"Who carried you up?"

"The women and little Michu, who found me unconscious."

"Good! they did not go to bed," said Corentin to himself. "The corporal has neither been struck by a shot nor with a club, for his adversary, in order to strike him, would have been obliged to be at his height and mounted. He could then have been disarmed only by an obstacle opposed to his passage. A piece of timber? not possible. An iron chain? it would have left marks. What did you feel?" said he, in a loud voice to the corporal on proceeding to examine him.

"I was thrown so suddenly—"

"The skin under your chin is torn off."

"It appears to me," said the corporal, "that my face was lashed with a rope."

"I have it," said Corentin. "They have

extended from one tree to the other a rope to obstruct the way—”

“That might have been the case,” said the corporal.

Corentin went downstairs and entered the room.

“Well, old sharper, let us finish it,” said Michu to Violette, at the same time eyeing the spy. “A hundred and twenty thousand francs in all, and you are master of my land. I will live on my income.”

“As there is but one God, I have only sixty thousand.”

“But, then, I give you time to pay the balance! Here we are still, since yesterday, without being able to complete the bargain—Land of first quality!”

“The land is good,” replied Violette.

“Some wine, wife!” exclaimed Michu.

“Have you not had enough?” exclaimed Marthe’s mother. “There is the fourteenth bottle since nine o’clock yesterday—”

“Have you been there since nine o’clock this morning?” said Corentin to Violette.

“No, I beg your pardon. Since yesterday evening I have not left the place, and I have made no headway; the more he makes me drink, the more he charges for his property.”

“In bargains, whoever raises the elbow, raises the price,” said Corentin.

A dozen empty bottles arranged at the end of the table, confirmed the old woman’s remark. At this moment the gendarme motioned from outside to Corentin and whispered to him on the doorstep:

"There is no horse in the stable."

"You have sent your boy on horseback to the city," said Corentin on entering, "he cannot be long in returning."

"No, monsieur, he is on foot."

"Well, what have you done with your horse?"

"I have lent him," said Michu in a sharp tone.

"Come here, my saint," said Corentin to the manager, "I have a few words to slip into your ear."

Corentin and Michu went out.

"The carbine which you loaded yesterday at four o'clock was to be used to kill the Councillor of State; Grévin, the notary, saw you; but we cannot hold you for that; there were few witnesses and a great deal of intention. You put Violette asleep, I know not how, and your wife and your boy passed the night out of doors, in order to warn Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne of our arrival and to save her cousins, whom you brought here, I do not yet know where. Your son or your wife threw the corporal from his horse quite ingeniously. In short, you have beaten us. You are a famous fellow. But all is not ended. We shall not lose by it. Are you willing to compromise? your masters will profit by it."

"Come here, we shall be able to talk without being heard," said Michu, leading the spy into the park as far as the pond.

When Corentin saw the sheet of water, he looked steadily at Michu, who counted, without doubt, on his strength to throw this man into seven feet of

mud under three feet of water. Michu replied with a look no less steady. It was exactly as if a boa-constrictor, soft and cold, had defied a red and tawny jaguar of Brazil.

"I am not thirsty," replied Corentin, who remained on the border of the meadow and put his hand into his side pocket to draw his small poniard.

"We cannot understand each other," said Michu, coolly.

"Be cautious, my dear man, justice will have her eye on you."

"If she does not see more clearly than you, there is danger for everyone," said the manager.

"You refuse?" said Corentin in a significant tone.

"I would rather have my head cut off a hundred times, were it possible to cut a man's head off a hundred times, than find myself in collusion with such a scoundrel as you are."

Corentin got quickly into his carriage, after having eyed Michu, the pavilion and Couraut, who was barking after him. He gave orders in passing through Troyes, and returned to Paris. Every troop of gendarmerie had its orders and secret instructions.

During the months of December, January and February, the pursuit was active and incessant in the smallest villages. Listeners were in all the wine-shops. Corentin learned three important things: a horse like Michu's was found dead in the environs of Lagny. The five horses, buried in the forest of Noddesme, had been sold at five hundred

francs each, by farmers and millers, to a man, who, according to the description, must have been Michu. When the law against the harborers and accomplices of Georges was promulgated, Corentin confined his supervision to the forest of Nodesme. Then, when Moreau, the Royalists and Pichegru were arrested, people no longer saw any strange faces in the country. Michu then lost his place, the notary of Arcis delivered him the letter in which the Councillor of State, having become senator, requested Grévin to receive the accounts of the manager and dismiss him. In three days Michu was given an acquittance in due form and became free. To the great astonishment of the country, he went to live at Cinq-Cygne, where Laurence took him as farmer of all the reserves of the château. The day of his installation coincided fatally with the execution of the Duc d'Enghien. People learned in almost every part of France at the same time, of the arrest, trial, conviction and death of the prince, terrible retaliation, which preceded the trials of Polignac, Rivière and Moreau.

II

CORENTIN'S REVENGE

*

While awaiting the construction of the farmhouse which Michu was to occupy, the false Judas lodged in the servants' quarters over the stables alongside of the famous break. Michu obtained two horses, one for himself and one for his son, for both joined Gothard in escorting Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne on all her excursions, which were taken, as may be supposed, in order to furnish food to the four noblemen and to see that they lacked nothing. François and Gothard, aided by Couraut and the countess's dogs, reconnoitred the neighborhood of the hiding-place and assured themselves that no one was in the vicinity. Laurence and Michu carried the provisions which Marthe, her mother and Catherine prepared without the knowledge of the domestics, in order to concentrate the secret, for each of them had no doubt that spies were in the village. Moreover, as a measure of prudence, these expeditions took place but twice a week, and always at different hours, at one time in daylight, at another in the night. These precautions continued

as long as the trial of Rivière, Polignac and Moreau. When the decree of the senate, which called to the Empire the Bonaparte family and proclaimed Napoléon Emperor, was submitted to the acceptance of the French people, Monsieur d'Hauteserre signed the list which Goulard presented to him. Finally, they learned that the Pope would come to crown Napoléon. From that time, Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne ceased her opposition to a petition on the part of the two D'Hauteserres and her cousins, to be stricken from the list of the *émigrés* and to recover their citizen rights. Monsieur d'Hauteserre hastened to Paris and went to see the former Marquis de Chargebœuf, who knew Monsieur de Talleyrand. This minister, then in favor, had the petition given to Josephine, who sent it to her husband, whom people called emperor, majesty, sire, before knowing the result of the popular election. Monsieur de Chargebœuf, Monsieur d'Hauteserre and the Abbé Goujet, who also came to Paris, obtained an interview with Talleyrand, and this minister promised them his support. Napoléon had already pardoned the principal actors in the great Royalist conspiracy directed against him; although the four noblemen were not suspected, yet the Emperor, on leaving a session of the Council of State, called into his private room the Senator Malin, Fouché, Talleyrand, Cambacérès, Lebrun and Dubois, the Prefect of Police.

"Gentlemen," said the future Emperor, who still retained his costume of First Consul, "we have

received from Messieurs de Simeuse and d'Hauteserre, officers in the army of the Prince de Condé, a petition that they may be authorized to enter France."

"They are in France," said Fouché.

"Like a thousand others whom I meet in Paris," replied Talleyrand.

"I do not think," replied Malin, "that you have met them, for they are concealed in the forest of Nodesme and consider themselves at home there."

He was careful not to mention to the First Consul and Fouché, the words to which he had owed his life; but supported by the reports made by Corentin, he convinced the council of the participation of the four noblemen in the plot of Messieurs de Rivière and De Polignac, by charging Michu with being their accomplice. The Prefect of Police confirmed the senator's assertions.

"But how could this manager have known that the conspiracy was discovered at the time when the Emperor, his council and I were the only persons who knew that secret?" asked the Prefect of Police.

No one paid any attention to the remark of Dubois.

"If they are concealed in a forest and you have not discovered them in seven months," said the Emperor to Fouché, "they have fully expiated their offenses."

"It is sufficient," said Malin, alarmed at the perspicacity of the Prefect of Police, "that they are my enemies in order that I may imitate the conduct

of Your Majesty; I request then their erasure and constitute myself their advocate with you."

"They will be less dangerous to you, rehabilitated, than as *émigrés*, for they will have sworn to support the ordinances of the Empire and the laws," said Fouché, who looked steadily at Malin.

"In what way do they threaten the senator?" said Napoléon.

Talleyrand conversed some time with the Emperor, in a low voice. The erasure and the rehabilitation of Messieurs de Simeuse and d'Hauteserre appeared then to be accorded.

"Sire," said Fouché, "you may again hear of these people."

Talleyrand, at the solicitation of the Duc de Grandlieu, had just plighted, in the name of these gentlemen, their faith as noblemen, an expression which had a charm for Napoléon, that they would undertake nothing against the Emperor and that they yielded obedience without reservation.

"Messieurs d'Hauteserre and De Simeuse are unwilling to bear arms against France after recent events. They have little sympathy for the Imperial government, and belong to that class of people whom Your Majesty will have to conquer; but they will be content to live upon French soil in obedience to the laws," said the minister.

Then he placed under the eyes of the Emperor a letter which he had received, and in which these sentiments were expressed.

"What is frank, must be sincere," said the

Copyrighted 1897 by G. B. & Son.



Pierre VIDAL





Pierre Vidal

Emperor, looking at Lebrun and Cambacérès. "Have you still any objections?" he asked Fouché.

"In the interest of Your Majesty," replied the future minister of the general police, "I request to be charged with transmitting to these gentlemen their cancellation, *when it shall have been definitely accorded*," said he in a loud voice.

"Let it be so," said Napoléon, on seeing an anxious expression on Fouché's face.

This little council broke up, apparently without having terminated the matter; but it resulted in fixing in Napoléon's memory a doubtful impression about the four noblemen. Monsieur d'Hauteserre, who was confident of success, had written a letter in which he announced this good news. The inhabitants of Cinq-Cygne were not then astonished to see, some days after, Goulard, who came to say to Madame d'Hauteserre and Laurence that they would have to send the four noblemen to Troyes, where the prefect would deliver to them the order which reinstated them in all their rights, after taking the oath and pledging their adherence to the laws of the Empire. Laurence replied to the mayor that she would have her cousins and the D'Hauteserres informed of the matter.

"They are not then here?" said Goulard.

Madame d'Hauteserre looked anxiously at the girl, who withdrew, leaving the mayor behind, in order to go and consult Michu, who saw nothing inexpedient in the immediate surrender of the *émigrés*. Laurence, Michu, his son and Gothard,

set out on horseback for the forest, leading an extra horse, for the countess was to accompany the four noblemen to Troyes and return with them. All the domestics, who were informed of the good news, assembled on the lawn to see the joyous cavalcade start. The four noblemen left their hiding-place, mounted their horses without being seen, and took the road to Troyes, accompanied by Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne. Michu, aided by his son and Gothard, closed the entrance to the cellar, and all three returned on foot. On the way, Michu recollected having left in the vault, the knives, forks and the silver goblet which his masters used, and returned alone. On arriving at the edge of the pond, he heard voices in the vault and went straight to the entrance through the brush.

"You have, no doubt, come to find your silver-ware?" said Peyrade, smiling and showing his big red nose in the foliage.

Without knowing why, for after all, the young men were saved, Michu felt pain in every joint, so great was that kind of vague, indescribable apprehension which a coming misfortune causes; nevertheless, he moved on and found Corentin on the steps with a taper in his hand.

"We are not malicious," said he to Michu, "we could have caught your former nobles a week ago, but we knew that they were stricken from the list—You are a troublesome fellow and you have given us too much annoyance not at least to satisfy our curiosity."

"I would certainly give something," exclaimed Michu, "to know how and by whom we have been sold!"

"If that puzzles you much, my boy," said Peyrade, smiling, "examine your horses' shoes, and you will see that you have betrayed yourselves."

"Without malice," said Corentin, motioning to the captain of gendarmerie to come with the horses.

"That miserable Parisian farrier, who shod a horse so perfectly *à l'anglaise*, and who has quit Cinq-Cygne, was one of their instruments!" exclaimed Michu; "it was enough to have the footprints of our horses, which were shod with calks, recognized and followed in damp weather by one of their people, disguised as a fagot-picker or poacher. We are quits."

Michu was soon consoled by the reflection that the discovery of this hiding-place was now without danger, since the noblemen were again Frenchmen and had recovered their liberty. However, he was right in all his presentiments. The police and the Jesuits have the virtue of never abandoning either their friends or their foes.

The good man D'Hauteserre returned from Paris, and was quite astonished at not having been the first to impart the good news. Durieu prepared the most succulent of dinners. The domestics attired themselves, and all waited with impatience the coming of the proscribed noblemen, who toward four o'clock, arrived, at once joyous and humiliated; for

they were to remain for two years under the surveillance of the superior police, they were obliged to present themselves every month at the prefecture, and were required to live during these two years in the commune of Cinq-Cygne.

"I shall send you the register to sign," the prefect had said to them. "Then, in a few months, you will request the removal of these conditions, which were, moreover, imposed on all Pichegru's accomplices. I will support your petition."

These restrictions, which were quite well-merited, somewhat saddened the young men. Laurence commenced to laugh.

"The Emperor of the French," said she, "is a rather badly bred man, who has not yet acquired the habit of pardoning."

The noblemen found at the grating all the inhabitants of the château, and on the road, a considerable part of the people of the village, who came to see these young men, whose adventures had made them famous in the department. Madame d'Hauteserre, whose face was covered with tears, held her sons in her arms for a long time; she could say nothing and remained greatly agitated, but happy, during a part of the evening. When the twins of Simeuse appeared and dismounted, there was a general exclamation of surprise, caused by their astonishing resemblance; the same look, the same voice, the same ways. Both made the same gesture in mounting, in passing the leg over the horse's croup, in dismounting, and in dropping the

reins. Their dress, moreover, which was precisely alike, contributed to make them pass for veritable Menæchmi. They wore boots *à la Souvorov*, figured at the instep, tight trousers of white skin, green hunting-jackets with metal buttons, black cravats and buckskin gloves. These two young men, then thirty-one years old, were, according to an expression of that time, charming cavaliers. Of medium size but well-made, they had bright eyes, adorned with long lashes and bathed in a limpid fluid, like those of children, black hair, handsome foreheads and a complexion of an olive-white. Their speech, gentle like that of women, fell gracefully from their handsome red lips; their manners, more elegant and polished than those of provincial noblemen, indicated that a knowledge of men and things had given them a second education, which is still more valuable than the first, and renders men accomplished. Thanks to Michu, who furnished them money during their exile, they had been able to travel and were well-received in foreign courts. The old nobleman and the abbé found in them a little haughtiness; but this was, perhaps, in their situation, the effect of an elevated character. They possessed the conspicuous little points of a careful education and displayed superior skill in all bodily exercises. The only dissimilarity which could make them distinguishable, existed in their ideas. The younger charmed as much by his gayety as the elder did by his melancholy; but this contrast, purely moral, could only be perceived after a long intimacy.

"Ah! my girl," whispered Michu to Marthe, "how can we avoid devoting ourselves to those two boys?"

Marthe, who, as wife and mother, admired the twins, answered by a pretty nod of the head to her husband, pressing his hand. The domestics had permission to kiss their new masters.

During the seven months of seclusion to which the four young men had condemned themselves, they several times committed the quite necessary imprudence of taking a few walks under the eye of Michu, his son and Gothard. During these walks on beautiful nights, Laurence, in bringing together the past and present of their common life, had felt the impossibility of choosing between the two brothers. An equal and pure love divided her heart. She thought she had two hearts. On their side, the two Pauls had not ventured to speak to each other of their imminent rivalry. Perhaps, they all three had already left the matter to chance. The state of mind in which she found herself, acted without doubt on Laurence, for after a moment of evident hesitation, she gave her arms to the two brothers, when about to enter the drawing-room, where she was followed by Monsieur and Madame d'Hautesserre, who detained and questioned their sons. At this moment, the domestics shouted:

"Long live the Cinq-Cygnés and the Simeuses!"

Laurence turned around, still between the two brothers, and made a charming gesture to express her thanks.

When these nine persons came to observe each other, for in every reunion, even in the heart of the family, a moment always arrives when people observe each other after long absences, at the first look which Adrien d'Hauteserre gave Laurence, and which was noticed by his mother and the Abbé Goujet, it seemed to them that this young man loved the countess. Adrien, the younger of the D'Hauteserres, had a tender and gentle soul. With him the heart had remained adolescent, notwithstanding the misfortunes which the man had just experienced. Like many military men, in whom constant peril leaves the soul pure, he felt oppressed by the charming timidity of youth. Moreover, he differed entirely from his brother, a man of brutal aspect, a great sportsman, an intrepid soldier, full of resolution, but material and without quick judgment as without delicacy in affairs of the heart. One was all soul, the other was all action; yet they both possessed in the same degree the honor which suffices for the life of noblemen. Of dark complexion, short, thin and dried up, Adrien d'Hauteserre had, nevertheless, an appearance of great strength; while his brother, who was tall, pale and blond, appeared weak. Adrien was of nervous temperament and strong in soul; Robert, although lymphatic, took pleasure in showing his purely physical strength. Families present some of these freaks, the causes of which cannot be without interest; but the only question here is, to explain why Adrien was not to encounter a rival in his

brother. Robert had for Laurence the affection of a relative and the respect of a noble for a young girl of his caste. As to their sentiments, the elder of the D'Hautesperres belonged to that class of men who consider woman as the dependent of man, in limiting to the physical her right of maternity, requiring of her many perfections and giving her no credit for them. According to them, to admit a woman into society, into politics and into the family, means social subversion. We are, to-day, so far removed from that old opinion of primitive people, that almost all women, even those who are unwilling to accept the baleful freedom offered by new sects, will be shocked at it; but Robert d'Hautesperre had the misfortune to think thus. Robert was a man of the Middle Ages, the younger was a man of to-day. These differences, instead of being an obstacle to affection, had, on the contrary, drawn them closely together. From the first evening, these differences were noticed and appreciated by the curé, Mademoiselle Goujet and Madame d'Hautesperre, who, playing their boston, already saw trouble in the future.

At twenty-three, and after the reflections of solitude and the anguish caused by the failure of a great enterprise, Laurence, having again become a woman, experienced a great need of affection; she displayed all the graces of her mind and was charming. She revealed the charms of her tenderness with the artlessness of a child of fifteen. During these last thirteen years, Laurence had

been a woman only in suffering, she wished to indemnify herself; she showed herself then as affectionate and charming as she had hitherto been great and intrepid. Moreover, the four old persons, who were the last in the salon, were quite disturbed by the new attitude of this charming girl. What force would not a passion have in a young person of this character and of this nobility? The two brothers loved equally the same woman and with a blind tenderness; of the two, which would Laurence choose? To choose one, would it not be to kill the other? Countess in her own right, she brought to her husband a title, honorable privileges, an old and illustrious name; the Marquis de Simeuse on thinking of these advantages, was perhaps disposed to sacrifice himself in order to see Laurence married to his brother, who according to the old laws, was poor and without title. But would the younger wish to deprive his brother of the great happiness of having Laurence for his wife? At a distance, this combat of love had had few inconveniences; moreover, so long as the two brothers ran any danger, the hazard of combat might settle this difficulty; but what was going to occur on their reunion? When Marie-Paul and Paul-Marie, who had both arrived at the age when the passions are in all their force, came to share between them the looks, expressions, attentions and words of their cousin, would not a jealousy arise, the consequences of which might be terrible? What would become of the beautiful, equal and simultaneous existence of the twins? To these

suppositions, made during the last game of boston, Madame d'Hauteserre replied that she did not believe that Laurence would marry one of her cousins. The old lady had experienced, during the evening, one of those inexplicable presentiments which are a secret between mothers and God. Laurence, in her conscience, was not less alarmed to see herself tête-à-tête with her cousins. To the spirited drama of the conspiracy, to the dangers incurred by the two brothers, to the misfortunes of their exile, succeeded a drama of which she had not dreamt. This noble girl could not resort to the extreme measure of not marrying either of the twins, she was too honest a woman to marry while cherishing an irresistible passion at the bottom of her heart. To remain unmarried, to weary her two cousins by her indecision, and take for husband him who would be faithful to her, notwithstanding her caprices, was a decision not so much sought as vaguely foreseen. On falling asleep she said to herself that the wisest thing to do was to leave the matter to chance. Chance in love is the providence of women.

The following morning Michu started for Paris, whence he returned a few days afterward with four fine horses for his new masters. In six weeks, the hunting season was to open, and the young countess had wisely thought that the violent distractions of this exercise would be a relief from the difficulties of conversation at the château. At first, an unforeseen effect resulted, which surprised the witnesses of these strange courtships and excited their admiration.

Without any meditated agreement, the two brothers rivaled each other in their attentions to and love for their cousin, finding in that a pleasure of soul which seemed to satisfy them. Between them and Laurence, life was as fraternal as it was between the two brothers, nothing more natural. After so long an absence, they felt the necessity of studying their cousin, of knowing her well and of making themselves known to her; they conceded her the right to choose and were sustained in this trial by that mutual affection which made their double life one and the same. Love, like maternity, was unable to distinguish between the two brothers. Laurence was obliged, in order to recognize them and not be mistaken, to give the elder a white and the younger a black cravat. Without this perfect resemblance and this identity of life, by which every one was confounded, a similar situation would appear simply impossible. It is to be explained by the fact only, which is one of those in which people do not believe without having seen them; and when they have been witnessed, the mind is more embarrassed in accounting for them than when it was asked to credit them. Did Laurence speak, her voice resounded alike in both hearts, equally affectionate and faithful. Did she express an ingenious, humorous or noble idea, her glance caught the pleasure expressed by two regards, which followed her in all her movements, interpreted her smallest desires, and smiled on her continually with new expressions, gay in one, and tenderly melancholy in the other.

In anything which affected the countess, the two brothers showed those admirable impulses of the heart, in harmony with the action, and which, according to the Abbé Goujet, arrived at sublimity. Thus, were it necessary to go for anything, were it a question of one of those little attentions which men so much like to pay women of whom they are enamored, the elder yielded the pleasure of this gallantry to his younger brother, at the same time giving his cousin a look which was at once touching and lofty. The younger took pleasure in paying debts of this kind. This sentimental combat of nobility, in which men arrive at the jealous ferocity of the animal, confounded all the ideas of the old people who contemplated it.

These little details frequently drew tears from the eyes of the countess. A single sensation, but which is, perhaps, immense in certain privileged organizations, may give an idea of Laurence's emotions; we shall comprehend it by recalling the perfect accord of two beautiful voices, like those of Sontag and Malibran, in some harmonious duo, by the complete unison of two instruments which performers of genius handle, and whose melodious sounds enter the soul like the sighs of a single impassioned being. Sometimes, on seeing the Marquis de Simeuse, plunged in an armchair, cast a profound and melancholy look on his brother, who talked and laughed with Laurence, the curé believed him capable of an immense sacrifice; but he soon caught in his eye the flash of invincible passion. Every time that one of

the twins found himself alone with Laurence, he could consider himself exclusively loved.

"It seems to me, then, that they are but one," said the countess to the Abbé Goujet, who was questioning her on the state of her heart.

The priest then discovered in her a total absence of coquetry. Laurence did not really believe herself loved by two men.

"But, my dear child," one evening said Madame d'Hauteserre, whose son was silently dying of love for Laurence, "it will, however, be necessary to make a choice!"

"Let us be happy," she replied. "God will save us from ourselves!"

Adrien d'Hauteserre concealed at the bottom of his heart a jealousy which was devouring him, and kept the secret of his torture, understanding what little hope he had. He was contented with the happiness of seeing this charming person, who, during the few months that this contest lasted, shone with all her brilliancy. In fact, Laurence, having become a coquette, had all the care of herself which loved women show. She followed the fashions and hastened, more than once, to Paris in order to enhance her beauty with finery or some novelty. In fine, in order to afford her cousins every enjoyment of home, from which they had been severed for so long a time, she made of her château, notwithstanding the loud protests of her guardian, the most completely comfortable habitation that existed in Champagne.

Robert d'Hauteserre understood nothing of this secret drama. He did not perceive the love of his brother for Laurence. As to the young girl, he liked to speak to her jestingly of her coquetry, for he confounded this detestable fault with the desire of pleasing; but he thus deceived himself about every matter of sentiment, taste or high breeding. Moreover, when the man of the Middle Ages put himself forward, Laurence immediately made of him, without his knowledge, the *butt* of the drama; she enlivened her cousins by debating with Robert, by leading him gradually into the middle of the marsh wherein stupidity and ignorance founder; she excelled in that ingenious mystification, which, to be complete, must leave the victim in good humor. Robert, however, in spite of the coarseness of his nature, was, during that delightful period, the only happy one whom these three charming creatures were to know, he never intervened between the Simeuses and Laurence by a manly word which, perhaps, would have decided the question. He was struck with the sincerity of the two brothers. Robert, doubtless, divined how a woman might tremble in according tokens of tenderness to one, which the other had been denied or which would have grieved him; how happy one of the brothers was at any favor shown the other, and how much suffering it might cause him at the bottom of his heart. This respect on the part of Robert explains admirably that situation which would certainly have obtained privileges in the times of faith when the

Sovereign Pontiff had the power to interpose and cut the gordian knot of these rare phenomena, which border on the most impenetrable mysteries. The Revolution had strengthened these hearts in the Catholic faith; thus, religion rendered this crisis still more terrible, for the grandeur of the characters augments the grandeur of the situations. Moreover, neither Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre, nor the curé and his sister looked for anything vulgar from the two brothers or from Laurence.

This drama, which remained mysteriously confined within the limits of the family, in which everyone observed it in silence, had at once a course so rapid and so slow; it admitted of so many unexpected enjoyments, little combats, delusive preferences, disappointed hopes, painful halts, postponed explanations and silent declarations, that the inhabitants of Cinq-Cygne paid no attention to the coronation of the Emperor Napoléon. These passions found a truce in the violent distractions of the chase, which by fatiguing excessively the body, removed from the soul the opportunities of traveling in the dangerous steppes of revery. Neither Laurence nor her cousins thought of matters of business, for each day had a throbbing interest.

"In truth," said Mademoiselle Goujet, one evening, "I do not know which of all these lovers loves the most!"

Adrien found himself alone in the salon with the four players of boston; he fixed his eyes on them and turned pale. For a few days he lived only for

the pleasure of seeing Laurence and hearing her talk.

"I believe," said the curé, "that the countess as a woman, loves with much more abandon."

Laurence, the two brothers and Robert, returned a few moments afterward. The journals had just arrived. On seeing the failure of the conspiracies attempted in the interior, England armed Europe against France. The disaster of Trafalgar had destroyed one of the most extraordinary plans that human genius has invented and by which the Emperor would have paid France for his election with the ruins of English power. At this time the camp at Boulogne was broken up. Napoléon, whose soldiers were inferior in number, as was always the case, went to deliver battle to Europe on fields on which he had not yet appeared. The entire world was occupied with the issue of this campaign.

"Oh! this time he will succumb," said Robert after reading the journal.

"He has on his hands the forces of Austria and Russia," said Marie-Paul.

"He has never made a campaign in Germany," added Paul-Marie.

"Of whom are you speaking?" asked Laurence.

"Of the Emperor," replied the three noblemen.

Laurence gave her two suitors a look of disdain which humiliated them, but which delighted Adrien. He made a gesture of admiration and his glance expressed a pride which said quite clearly that he now thought only of Laurence.

"You see that love has made her forget her hatred," said the Abbé Goujet in a low voice.

It was the first, the last, the only reproach which the two brothers incurred; but at this moment they found themselves inferior in love to their cousin who two months afterward learned of the astonishing triumph of Austerlitz only through a discussion which the good man D'Hautesserre had with his two sons. Faithful to his plan, the old man desired that his sons should ask to serve; they would, without doubt, serve according to their rank, and would still be able to achieve honorable distinction in military life. The party of pure royalism had become the strongest at Cinq-Cygne. The four noblemen and Laurence laughed at the prudent old man, who seemed to scent misfortune in the future. Prudence is perhaps less a virtue than the exercise of a *sense* of the mind, if it is possible to couple these two words; but a day will come, without doubt, when physiologists and philosophers will admit that the senses are in some measure the sheath of a quick and penetrating action which proceeds from the mind.



After the conclusion of peace between France and Austria, toward the end of the month of February, 1806, a relative, the former Marquis de Chargebœuf, who at the time that the exiles asked to be stricken from the list of the proscribed, had interested himself in Messieurs de Simeuse and who was later to give them great proofs of attachment, whose property extends from Seine-et-Marne into the Aube, arrived at Cinq-Cygne from his estate in a kind of calèche, which at that time, they jestingly called a *berlingot*. When this wretched carriage wended its way along the road, the occupants of the château, who were at breakfast, had a fit of laughter; but on recognizing the bald head of the old man, which was thrust between the leather curtains of the *berlingot*, Monsieur d'Hauteserre mentioned his name, and all arose and went to meet the head of the House of Chargebœuf.

"We were wrong in allowing ourselves to be anticipated," said the Marquis de Simeuse to his brother and the two D'Hauteserres, "we should have gone and thanked him."

The carriage was driven by a domestic, clothed as a peasant, seated on a box attached to the body of the carriage; he planted in a leather socket a carter's whip, and proceeded to assist the marquis to alight; but Adrien and the younger De Simeuse anticipated him, unfastened the door, which was

held by copper buttons, and helped the good man out, notwithstanding his objections. This marquis claimed that his yellow *berlingot*, with leather door, was an excellent and commodious carriage. The domestic, aided by Gothard, was already unharnessing the two fine horses with shining croups, and which were, without doubt, used as much for farm-work as for driving.

"What! in spite of the cold? why, you are a knight of bygone days!" said Laurence to her old relative, taking his arm and conducting him to the salon.

"It is not for you to come to see an old chap like me," said he adroitly, thus reproaching his young relatives.

"What brings him here?" the amiable D'Hauteserre said to himself.

Monsieur de Chargebœuf, a fine old gentleman of sixty-seven years, in white breeches, with small, frail legs covered with colored stockings, wore and dressed his hair in the antique style affected by the *émigrés*, and duly powdered. His hunting-coat of green cloth with gold buttons, was ornamented with gold braid. His white vest dazzled the eye with its heavy gold embroidery. These trappings, still in vogue among old people, were becoming to his face, which greatly resembled that of Frederick the Great. He never put on his hat, in order not to destroy the effect of the half-moon outlined on his head with a layer of powder. He rested his right hand on his bill-headed cane, which, with his hat,

he held with a grace worthy of Louis XIV. This worthy old man took off a wadded silk overcoat and plunged into an armchair, holding between his legs his three-cornered chapeau and cane in an attitude the secret of which has never belonged but to the *roués* of the court of Louis XV, and which left the hands free to play with the snuff-box, always treasured. Moreover, the marquis drew from his vest pocket, which was fastened with a guard embroidered in gold arabesque, a rich snuff-box. While preparing his pinch and offering snuff around with another charming gesture accompanied with affectionate regards, he noticed the pleasure which his visit caused. He then appeared to comprehend why the young *émigrés* had failed in their duty toward him. He had the air of saying: "When people are in love, they make no visits."

"Shall we entertain you for a few days?" said Laurence.

"It's impossible," he replied. "If we were not so separated by events, for you have traveled greater distances than those which remove us from each other, you would know, dear child, that I have daughters, daughters-in-law, granddaughters and grandsons. All these people would be uneasy if I did not return this evening, and I have eighteen leagues to go."

"You have very good horses," said the Marquis de Simeuse.

"Oh! I come from Troyes, where I had business yesterday."

After the customary questions about the family, about the Marquis de Chargebœuf and about really unimportant matters, in which politeness requires people to take a lively interest, it appeared to Monsieur d'Hauteserre that Monsieur de Chargebœuf came to persuade his young kinsmen not to commit any imprudence. According to the old marquis, the times were very much changed, and no one could tell what the Emperor would become.

"Oh!" said Laurence, "he will become a god."

The good old man spoke of the concessions to be made. On hearing him speak of the necessity of submission with an assurance and authority which he did not employ in support of all his other views, Monsieur d'Hauteserre looked at his sons in an almost supplicating way.

"You would serve that man?" said the Marquis de Simeuse to the Marquis de Chargebœuf.

"Yes, certainly, were it necessary to do so in the interest of my family."

Finally the old man made them foresee, but vaguely, remote dangers; when Laurence summoned him to explain himself, he requested the four noblemen to hunt no more and to remain quietly at home.

"You still consider the domain of Gondreville as belonging to you," said he to Messieurs de Simeuse, "you thus revive a terrible hatred. I see by your astonishment that you are ignorant of the enmity against you at Troyes, where they remember your

courage. No one troubles himself to relate how you escaped the pursuit of the general police of the Empire; some praise you for it, while others look upon you as enemies of the Emperor. A few fanatics are astonished at Napoléon's clemency toward you. This is nothing. You have outwitted men who believe themselves abler than you, and people of low degree never forgive. Sooner or later, justice—in your department justice emanates from your enemy Senator Malin, for he has placed his creatures everywhere, even among the public officers,—his justice then will be very much pleased to find you engaged in some bad affair. Some peasant will seek a quarrel with you on his field, when he finds you therein: you will be armed, and as you are quick, something unfortunate soon occurs. In your position, it is necessary to be a hundred times right in order not to be found wrong. I do not speak to you thus without cause. The police are constantly watching the district in which you live, and keep a commissary of police in that little hole of Arcis expressly to protect the senator of the Empire from your violence. He is afraid of you and says so."

"But he calumniates us!" exclaimed the younger Simeuse.

"He calumniates you! I believe it, I—But what do the public believe? that is the important matter. Michu aimed his carbine at the senator, who has not forgotten it. Since your return, the countess has taken Michu into her house. For many persons

and for the greater part of the public, Malin is then right. You do not know how ticklish the position of the *émigrés* is in face of those who find themselves in possession of their property. The prefect, a man of intelligence, conveyed to me a few words about you yesterday which have disturbed me. After all, I would not like to see you here—”

This reply was received with profound astonishment. Marie-Paul rang the bell vigorously.

“Gothard,” said he to the little fellow who came, “go and find Michu.”

The former manager of Gondreville did not make them wait.

“Michu, my friend,” said the Marquis de Simeuse, “is it true that you intended to kill Malin?”

“Yes, Monsieur le Marquis, and when he returns I will look out for him—”

“Do you know that we are suspected of having incited you, that our cousin, in employing you as farmer, is accused of having been a party to your projects?”

“Heavenly blessings!” exclaimed Michu, “am I then cursed? Shall I then never be able to rid you quietly of Malin?”

“No, my boy, no,” replied Paul-Marie, “but it will soon be necessary to quit the country and our service, we will take care of you, we will place you in a position to augment your fortune. Sell everything you possess here, convert your investments into money, we will send you to one of our friends in Trieste, who has extensive relations, and who will

give you very profitable employment until matters become better here for us all."

Tears came to the eyes of Michu, who remained as though nailed to the floor on which he stood.

"Were there any witnesses when you placed yourself in ambush to fire on Malin?" asked the Marquis de Chargebœuf.

"Grévin the notary was talking to him, that is what kept me from killing him and very fortunately! Madame la Comtesse knows why," said Michu, looking at his mistress.

"This Grévin is not the only one who knows it?" said Monsieur de Chargebœuf, who appeared annoyed by the examination, although carried on in the family.

"That spy, who, some time ago, came to entangle my masters, also knew it," replied Michu.

Monsieur de Chargebœuf arose as if to look at the gardens and said:

"But you have certainly made something of Cinq-Cygne?"

Then he went out, followed by the two brothers and Laurence, who conjectured the meaning of that question.

"You are frank and generous, but always imprudent," said the old man to them. "Let me inform you of a public rumor, *which must be a calumny*, nothing more natural: but you make it a verity for weak people like Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre and their sons—Oh, young men! young men!—you should leave Michu here and go away

yourselves, you! But, at all events, if you remain in this country, write a word to the senator about Michu; say to him that you have just heard through me of the reports which are in circulation concerning your farmer and that you have sent him away."

"We!" exclaimed the two brothers, "write to Malin, to the assassin of our father and of our mother, the brazen despoiler of our fortune!"

"All that is true; but he is one of the most important personages of the imperial court and the king of the Aube."

"He who voted the death of Louis XVI. in case the army of Condé should enter France, if not perpetual confinement!" said the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne.

"He who perhaps counseled the Duc d'Enghien's death!" exclaimed Paul-Marie.

"Ah! but if you wish to recapitulate his titles of nobility," exclaimed the marquis, "he who pulled the skirt of Robespierre's coat to make him fall, when he saw that those who arose to overthrow him were the most numerous; he who would have had Bonaparte shot if the 18 Brumaire had failed; he who would have brought back the Bourbons, if Napoléon tottered; he whom the strongest will always find on his side ready to furnish him sword or pistol with which to dispatch an adversary who inspires fear!—But an additional reason!"

"We are falling very low," said Laurence.

"Children," said the old Marquis de Chargebœuf, taking them all three by the hand, and leading them aside toward one of the grass-plots, at that time

covered with a light bed of snow, "you are going to lose your tempers in listening to the advice of a prudent man, but I owe it to you, and here is what I would do: I would take for mediator an easy-going old fellow, like myself, for instance; I would authorize him to ask a million of Malin in consideration of a confirmation of the sale of Gondreville—Oh! he would consent to it and keep the matter a secret. You would have at the present price of the public funds, an annual income of a hundred thousand francs, and you could go and buy some handsome estate in another corner of France, you would leave Cinq-Cygne under the management of Monsieur d'Hauteserre, and would draw lots to determine which of you two is to be the husband of this beautiful heiress. But the talk of an old man is in the ears of young people what the talk of young people is in the ears of the old, a sound, the sense of which escapes."

The old marquis motioned to his three relatives that he did not wish any reply, and returned to the salon, where, during their conversation, the Abbé Goujet and his sister had arrived. The proposition to draw lots for their cousin's hand had revolted the two Simeuses, and Laurence was almost disgusted at the bitterness of the remedy which her relative suggested. Moreover, they were, all three, less gracious toward the old man, without ceasing to be polite. Affection was wounded. Monsieur de Chargebœuf, who felt this coldness, looked at these three charming creatures with glances full of

compassion. Although the conversation became general, he recurred to the necessity of submission to events, at the same time praising Monsieur d'Hauteserre for his persistency in wishing his sons to enter the service.

"Bonaparte," said he, "makes dukes. He has created fiefs of the Empire, he will make counts. Malin would like to be Comte de Gondreville. It is an idea which may be profitable to you," he added, looking at the Simeuses.

"Or fatal," said Laurence.

As soon as his horses were ready, the marquis withdrew and was accompanied to his carriage by everyone present. When he had entered the same, he beckoned for Laurence, and she alighted on the step with the lightness of a bird.

"You are not an ordinary woman, and you should comprehend me," he whispered to her. "Malin feels too much remorse to leave you undisturbed, he will spread some net for you. At least, be on your guard in every act, even the most trifling! in a word, compromise, this is my last remark."

The two brothers remained standing near their cousin in the middle of the grass-plot, looking in profound immobility at the single-seated berlin which passed through the gateway and flew away on the road toward Troyes, for Laurence had repeated to them the final remark of the friendly old man. Experience will always be at fault in appearing in a berlin, in colored stockings, with the bow of his wig falling on the nape of the neck. Not

one of these young hearts was able to conceive the change which was working in France. Indignation excited their nerves, and their noble blood boiled with honor in every vein.

"The head of the house of Chargebœuf!" said the Marquis de Simeuse, "a man who has for motto: VIENNE UN PLUS FORT!—*Adsit fortior!*—one of the most glorious of battle cries—"

"He has become *Le Bœuf*," said Laurence, smiling with bitterness.

"We are not living in the time of St. Louis," replied the younger Simeuse.

"MOURIR EN CHANTANT!" exclaimed the countess. "This cry of the five young girls who founded our family will be mine."

"Ours, is it not CY MEURS—here I die!—So, no quarter!" replied the elder Simeuse, "for on reflection we should find that our relative, Le Bœuf, has very maturely ruminated on what he came to tell us. Gondreville to become the name of a Malin!"

"The home!" exclaimed the younger.

"Mansard designed it for nobility and the people will bring forth and nestle their young in it!" said the elder.

"If that is to occur, I would rather see Gondreville burnt!" exclaimed Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne.

A man from the village, who came to see a calf which the good man d'Hauteserre had sold him, heard this remark on leaving the stable.

"Let us go in," said Laurence, smiling; "we have nearly committed an imprudence and decided in favor of Le Bœuf, apropos of a calf."

"My poor Michu!" said she, on entering the salon, "I had forgotten your rashness, but our sanctity is not highly rated in the country, so do not compromise us. Have you any other peccadillo with which to reproach yourself?"

"I reproach myself for not having killed the assassin of my old masters before running to the aid of these here."

"Michu!" exclaimed the curé.

"But I will not quit the country," said he, continuing without paying attention to the curé's exclamation, "until I know that you are safe, I see fellows roaming around whom I do not like. The last time we hunted in the forest, there came to me the kind of guard who took my place at Gondreville, and who asked me if we were at home there. 'Oh! my boy,' said I to him, 'it's difficult to discontinue in two months things which we have been doing for two centuries!'"

"You are wrong, Michu," said the Marquis de Simeuse, smiling with pleasure.

"What did he say in reply?" asked Monsieur d'Hauteserre.

"He said," replied Michu, "that he would inform the senator of our pretensions."

"Comte de Gondreville!" exclaimed the elder d'Hauteserre. "Ah! the veritable masquerade! In fact, they address Bonaparte as *His Majesty*—"

"And Monseigneur, the Grand Duc de Berg, as *His Highness*," said the curé.

"Who is that?" said Monsieur de Simeuse.

"Murat, Napoléon's brother-in-law," said the venerable D'Hauteserre.

"Good!" said Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne. "And do they say *Her Majesty* to the widow of the Marquis de Beauharnais?"

"Yes, mademoiselle," said the curé.

"We should go to Paris and see all that!" exclaimed Laurence.

"Alas, mademoiselle," said Michu, "I went there to put Michu in the lyceum, I can swear to you that there is nothing to ridicule about the Imperial Guard. If the whole army is on that model, the thing may last longer than we shall."

"People speak of noble families which enter the service," said Monsieur d'Hauteserre.

"And under the present laws, your boys will be obliged to serve," said the curé. "The law no longer recognizes rank or name."

"That man has done us more harm with his court than the Revolution with its axe!" exclaimed Laurence.

"The church prays for him," said the curé.

These words uttered successively were so many commentaries on the sensible remarks of the old Marquis de Chargebœuf; but these young people had too much confidence, too much honor, to accept a compromise. They said to each other, moreover, what conquered parties have said in every epoch:

that the prosperity of the victorious party would end; that the Emperor was sustained by the army only; that the *de facto* perished sooner or later before the *de jure*, etc. Notwithstanding this advice, they fell into the ditch dug before them, which prudent and tractable people like the good-natured D'Hautesserre would have avoided. If men consented to be frank, they would, perhaps, admit that misfortune has never overthrown them without their having received some obvious or occult warning. Many have perceived the profound meaning of this mysterious or visible advice only after the disaster.

"In any event, Madame la Comtesse knows that I cannot quit the country without having rendered my accounts," whispered Michu to Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne.

A sign that he was understood, was her only reply to the farmer, who went away. Michu, who immediately sold his lands to Beauvisage, the farmer of Bellache, could not obtain his money before twenty days. A month after the visit of the marquis, Laurence, who had informed her two cousins of the extent of their fortune, suggested that they should take mid-lent day to remove the million buried in the forest. The great quantity of snow which had fallen had up to that time prevented Michu from going in quest of the treasure; but he was delighted to perform this work with his masters. Michu positively wished to quit the country, he feared himself.

"Malin has just unexpectedly arrived at Gondreville and people do not know why," said he to his mistress, "and I would not object to have Gondreville offered for sale in consequence of the death of the proprietor. I think I am to be blamed for not having followed my inspirations!"

"What motive can he have for quitting Paris in the middle of winter?"

"All Arcis is talking about it," replied Michu; "he has left his family in Paris and is accompanied only by his valet. Monsieur Grévin, the notary of Arcis; Madame Marion, the wife of the receiver general of the Aube and sister-in-law of the Marion who lent his name to Malin, keep him company."

Laurence considered mid-lent day an excellent day, because it enabled her to get rid of the servants. The masquerades attracted the peasantry to the town, and no one was in the fields. But the choice of the day served the fatality exactly, which often happens in criminal affairs. Chance made its calculations with as much ability as Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne employed in her own. Eleven hundred thousand francs in a château on the borders of a forest would have occasioned on the part of Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre so much anxiety, that the young D'Hauteserres, who were consulted, agreed that nothing should be said to them about the matter. The secret of that expedition was confined to Gothard, Michu, the four noblemen and Laurence. After many calculations, it appeared possible to put forty-eight thousand francs in a long sack on the

croup of each horse. Three journeys would suffice. As a measure of prudence, they agreed, then, to send all the domestics, whose curiosity might be dangerous, to Troyes, there to see the rejoicings of mid-lent. Catherine, Marthe and Durieu, on whom they could count, would guard the château. The domestics very willingly accepted the liberty which was given them, and started out before daylight. Gothard, aided by Michu, groomed and saddled the horses early in the morning. The caravan moved through the gardens of Cinq-Cygne, whence masters and domestics reached the forest. At the moment when they mounted their horses, for the gate of the park was so low that every one crossed the park on foot, holding his horse by the bridle, the farmer of Bellache, old Beauvisage, happened to pass by.

"Halloo!" exclaimed Gothard, "there is some one—"

"Oh! it's I," said the honest farmer, coming out. "I greet you, gentlemen; you are going to hunt, then, notwithstanding the orders of the prefecture? It's not I who will complain; but look out! If you have friends, you also have enemies."

"Oh!" replied the rugged D'Hauteserre, "God wishes our hunt to be successful, and you will again find your masters."

These remarks, to which the event gave an entirely different meaning, caused Laurence to give Robert a severe look. The elder of the Simeuses believed that Malin would return the estate of

Gondreville in consideration of an indemnity. These young people wished to do the contrary of what the Marquis de Chargebœuf had counseled. Robert, who shared their hopes, was thinking of it while making that fatal utterance.

"In any event, *mum*, old fellow!" said Michu to Beauvisage, who was the last to leave, taking with him the key of the gate.

It was one of those beautiful days at the end of March, during which the air is dry, the ground clean, the atmosphere pure, and when the temperature forms, as it were, a contrast with the leafless trees. The weather was so mild that the eye perceived here and there fields of verdure over the country.

"We are going to look for a treasure, while you are the real treasure of our house, cousin," laughingly said the elder Simeuse.

Laurence took the lead, having on each side of her horse one of her cousins. The two D'Hauteserres followed her and were themselves followed by Michu. Gothard went ahead to reconnoitre the route.

"Since our fortune is going to be recovered, in part at least, marry my brother," said the younger, in a low voice. "He adores you, and you will be as rich as nobles ought to be at the present time."

"No, let him have all the fortune, and I will marry you, I, who am rich enough for two," she replied.

"Let it be so!" exclaimed the Marquis de Simeuse. "As for me, I shall go to find a wife worthy of being your sister."

"You love me, then, less than I thought you did?" replied Laurence, observing him with a jealous expression.

"No; I love you both more than you love me!" responded the marquis.

"So you would sacrifice yourself?" asked Laurence of the elder Simeuse, giving him a look of momentary preference.

The marquis remained silent.

"Well! I, I should then think only of you, and that would be insupportable to my husband," replied Laurence, whom this silence provoked to a movement of impatience.

"How could I live without you?" exclaimed the younger, looking at his brother.

"However, you cannot marry us both," said the marquis. "And," added he, in the abrupt manner of a man who is wounded in his affections, "it is time to come to a decision!"

He pushed his horse ahead, so that the two D'Hauteserres should hear nothing. His brother's horse and that of Laurence followed this movement. When they had put a reasonable interval between them and the three others, Laurence wished to speak, but her tears were at first her only language.

"I will enter a convent," she finally said.

"And you would let the family of Cinq-Cygne come to an end?" said the younger Simeuse; "and instead of one unhappy man, who consents to be so, you would make two miserable! No, that one of us two who will only be your brother, will be

resigned. On hearing that we were not so poor as we thought, we came to an understanding," said he, looking at the marquis. "If I be the chosen one, all our fortune belongs to my brother. If I be not, he gives it to me, together with the titles of Simeuse, for he will become Cinq-Cygne! At all events, whoever may be unsuccessful, will have opportunities of establishing himself. After all, if he feels himself dying of grief, he will seek death in the army, in order not to render the household unhappy."

"We are true cavaliers of the Middle Ages; we are worthy of our fathers!" exclaimed the elder. "Speak, Laurence!"

"We do not wish to remain in this state," said the younger.

"Do not think, Laurence, that devotion is without pleasure," said the elder.

"My dearly beloved," said she, "I am unable to decide. I love you both as if you were a single being, and as you loved your mother. God will aid you. I will not make the choice. We will leave it to hazard, and I will impose one condition."

"What?"

"Whoever may become my brother, will remain near me until I permit him to leave. I wish to be the sole judge of the fitting time for departure."

"Yes," said the two brothers without understanding the meaning of their cousin.

"The first of you two to whom Madame d'Hauteserre may speak this evening at table, after the

Benediction, shall be my husband. But neither of you will employ any stratagem with a view of questioning her."

"We will play fairly," said the younger.

Each of the brothers kissed Laurence's hand. The certainty of an ultimate result, which each might believe favorable to him, made the twins extremely gay.

"At all events, dear Laurence, you will make a Count de Cinq-Cygne," said the elder.

"We are playing to determine which shall not remain a Simeuse," said the younger.

"I believe that madame will not long remain a maid after this hit," said Michu, who was behind the two D'Hautesperres. "My masters are very joyous. If my mistress makes her choice, I am not going to leave, I wish to see that wedding."

Neither of the two D'Hautesperres responded. A magpie flew suddenly between the D'Hautesperres and Michu, who, superstitious like all primitive people, thought he heard the bells of a mortuary service. The day commenced, then, gaily for the lovers, who seldom see magpies when they are together in the woods. Michu, armed with his plan, recognized the places; each nobleman had furnished himself with a pick. The money was found. The part of the forest where it had been concealed was deserted, far from any route and from any habitation, so that the caravan loaded with gold, met no one. There was a misfortune. On leaving Cinq-Cygne to go for the last two hundred thousand

francs, the caravan, emboldened by success, took a road more direct than that by which it had gone on preceding journeys. This road passed over an elevation from which the park of Gondreville could be seen.

"Fire!" said Laurence, on perceiving a column of bluish fire.

"It's some bonfire," replied Michu.

Laurence, who knew the smallest paths of the forest, left the caravan and went at full speed to the pavilion of Cinq-Cygne, Michu's former habitation. Although the pavilion was deserted and closed, the gate was open, and the traces of the passage of several horses struck Laurence's eyes. The column of smoke arose from a meadow of the English park, where she presumed that they were burning weeds.

"Ah! you have a hand in it also," exclaimed Violette, who came out of the park on his horse at a full gallop, and halted before Laurence. "Why this is a farce of a carnival, is it not? they will not kill him?"

"Whom?"

"Your cousins do not wish his death?"

"Whose death?"

"The senator's."

"You are crazy, Violette."

"Well! then, what are you doing here?" he asked.

At the idea of the danger which her cousins ran, the intrepid rider started at full speed and arrived on

the ground at the moment when they were filling the sacks.

"Quick! I do not know what is happening, but let us return to Cinq-Cygne!"

While the noblemen were employed in the transportation of the fortune saved by the old marquis, a strange scene took place at the château of Gondreville.

*

At two o'clock in the afternoon the senator and his friend Grévin were playing a game of chess before the fire in the large salon of the ground floor. Madame Grévin and Madame Marion were conversing at the chimney corner, seated on a sofa. All the domestics had gone to see a curious masquerade which had been for a long time announced in the district of Arcis. The family of the guard who replaced Michu at the pavilion of Cinq-Cygne had also gone. The senator's valet and Violette were alone at the time in the château. The concierge, two gardeners and their wives were at their posts; but their pavilion is situated at the entrance of the courtyard at the end of the avenue of Arcis, and the distance which lies between this inn and the château did not permit any one there to hear the discharge of a gun. Moreover, these domestics were on the doorstep and were looking in the direction of Arcis, which is a quarter of a league away, expecting to see the arrival of the masquerade. Violette was awaiting, in a large antechamber, the moment to be received by the senator and Grévin, in order to negotiate the affair relative to the extension of his lease. At this moment, five men, masked and gloved, who in size, manners and gait resembled the D'Hauterres, the De Simeuses and Michu, fell upon the valet and Violette, whom they gagged

with handkerchiefs and tied to chairs in the pantry. Notwithstanding the celerity of the aggressors, the work was not done before the valet and Violette had each uttered a cry. This cry was heard in the salon. The two women were disposed to recognize it as a cry of alarm.

"Listen!" said Madame Grévin, "there are robbers—"

"Bah! it's a mid-lent cry!" said Grévin, "we are going to have the masqueraders at the château."

This discussion gave the five unknown men time to fasten the doors on the side of the main court and to confine the valet and Violette. Madame Grévin, who was quite an obstinate woman, positively wished to know the cause of the noise; she arose and fell among the five masked men, who treated her as they did Violette and the valet; they then forcibly entered the salon, where the two strongest seized and gagged the Comte de Gondreville and carried him off through the park, while the other three gagged Madame Marion and the notary, and tied them in armchairs. The execution of this attack did not take more than half an hour. The three unknown men, who were soon rejoined by those who had carried off the senator, searched the château from the cellar to the loft. They opened all the closets without picking the locks; they sounded the walls and were, in short, masters of the château until five o'clock in the evening. At this moment, the valet succeeded in biting through the cords which bound Violette's hands. Violette, freed from his gag,

commenced to cry for help. On hearing these cries, the five unknown men entered the gardens, jumped on horses similar to those of Cinq-Cygne and fled, but not quickly enough to prevent Violette from seeing them. After freeing the valet, who untied the woman and the notary, Violette straddled his horse and hastened after the malefactors. On arriving at the pavilion, he was as much astonished to see the two halves of the gate open as to see Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne on watch.

When the young countess had disappeared, Violette was rejoined by Grévin on horseback, accompanied by the rural guard of the commune of Gondreville, to whom the concierge had given a horse from the stable of the château.

The wife of the concierge had gone to notify the gendarmerie of Arcis. Violette informed Grévin of his meeting with Laurence and of the flight of that daring young girl, whose profound and decided character was known to them.

"She was keeping watch," said Violette.

"Is it possible that the nobles of Cinq-Cygne were guilty of that act?" exclaimed Grévin.

"What!" responded Violette, "you did not recognize that big Michu? It was he who fell on me! I certainly felt his grip. Besides, the five horses were without doubt from Cinq-Cygne."

On seeing the marks of the horses' shoes on the sand of the round-point and in the park, the notary left the rural guard on the lookout at the wicket, in order to see to the preservation of these precious

impressions, and sent Violette to look for the justice of the peace at Arcis, with a view of having them legally attested. Then he returned promptly to the salon of the château of Gondreville, where the lieutenant and sub-lieutenant of the imperial gendarmerie arrived, accompanied by four men and a corporal. This lieutenant was, as may be supposed, the corporal whose head François had broken two years before, and to whom Corentin then made known his malicious adversary. This man, named Giguët, whose brother served in and became one of the best colonels of artillery, was selected on account of his ability as an officer of gendarmerie. Later he commanded the squadron of the Aube. The sub-lieutenant, named Welff, had formerly conducted Corentin from Cinq-Cygne to the pavilion and from the pavilion to Troyes. On the way the Parisian had sufficiently instructed the Egyptian as to that which he called the villainy of Laurence and Michu. These two officers were to show and did show great zeal in the pursuit of the inhabitants of Cinq-Cygne. Malin and Grévin had in their mutual interest worked at the code, called Brumaire, year IV, which was the judicial work of the Convention called national, and was promulgated by the Directory.

Thus Grévin, who knew that legislation thoroughly, was able to operate in this affair with terrible celerity, but under a presumption, which was equivalent to a certainty, respecting the criminality of Michu, the D'Hauteserres and De Simeuses. No

one to-day, except some old magistrates, recalls the organization of these courts of judicature, which Napoléon abolished precisely at that time, by the promulgation of his Codes, and by the institution of his magistracy, which now administers the laws of France.

The Code of Brumaire, year IV, empowered the director of the jury of the department to try immediately the parties charged with the offense committed at Gondreville.

Let us remark, by the way, that the Convention had erased from judicial language the word crime. It admitted only misdemeanors against the law, offenses carrying with them fines, imprisonment, ignominious or corporal punishments. Death was a corporal punishment. However, the corporal punishment of death was to be suppressed in time of peace and replaced by twenty-four years of hard labor. Thus the Convention estimated that twenty-four years of hard labor were equivalent to the punishment of death. What is to be said of the penal code which inflicts hard labor for life? The organization at that time prepared by Napoléon's Council of State, suppressed the magistracy of jury directors, who exercised, in fact, enormous powers. With respect to the prosecution and arraignment of offenders, the director of the jury was, in some sort, and at the same time, a court officer, the king's prosecutor, examining magistrate and royal court. His procedure and indictment were only subject to the sanction of a commissioner of the executive

power and to the verdict of eight jurors, to whom he disclosed the facts developed at the examination, who heard the witnesses and accused, and rendered a preliminary verdict known as an indictment. The director exercised such an influence over the jurors assembled in his office, that they could not avoid co-operating with him. These jurors constituted the jury of indictment. There were other jurors who composed the jury of the criminal tribunal charged with the trial of the accused. In contradistinction to the jury of indictment, the latter was called the jury of judgment. The criminal tribunal, to which Napoléon had just given the name of criminal court, was composed of a president, of four judges, of a public prosecutor, and of a government commissioner. Nevertheless, from 1799 to 1806, there were courts called special, which tried certain criminal cases without juries, in certain departments, and which were composed of judges taken from the civil tribunal, which constituted itself a special court. This conflict of special and of criminal justice gave rise to questions of competency, which the court of appeal decided. If the department of the Aube had had its special court, the trial of the offense committed against a senator of the Empire would, without doubt, have been referred to it; but this tranquil department was exempt from this exceptional jurisdiction. Grévin dispatched then the sub-lieutenant to the director of the jury of Troyes. The Egyptian went at full speed and returned to

Gondreville, bringing back by post this quasi sovereign magistrate.

The director of the jury of Troyes, who had been a deputy bailiff and secretary of one of the committees of the Convention, was Malin's friend, who had him appointed. This magistrate, named Lechesneau, a regular practitioner of old criminal justice, had, like Grévin, greatly assisted Malin in his legal labors in the Convention. Moreover, Malin recommended him to Cambacérès, who appointed him attorney-general in Italy. Unfortunately for his career, Lechesneau had relations with a titled lady of Turin, and Napoléon was obliged to remove him in order to save him from a criminal prosecution commenced by the husband with respect to the abduction of an adulterine child. Lechesneau, owing everything to Malin and divining the importance of such an attack, had brought the captain of gendarmerie and a picket of twelve men.

Before leaving, he naturally came to an understanding with the prefect, who, overtaken by night, was not able to avail himself of the telegraph. He dispatched a messenger to Paris to inform the minister of the general police, the chief-justice and the Emperor, of this unheard-of crime. Lechesneau found in the drawing-room of Gondreville, Madame Marion and Madame Grévin, Violette, the senator's valet, and the justice of the peace attended by his clerk. Already, searches had been made in the château. The justice of the peace, assisted by Grévin, was carefully collecting the first elements

of the examination. The magistrate was, at first, struck by the profound combinations which the choice of the day and hour revealed. The hour prevented any immediate search for indications and proofs. In that season, at half-past five, the moment when Violette had been able to pursue the offenders, it was almost night; and for malefactors, night is almost impunity. When they selected a holiday on which every one would go to see the masquerade at Arcis, and the senator would be alone in his house, was it not for the purpose of avoiding witnesses?

"Let us render justice to the perspicacity of the officers of the prefecture of police," said Lechesneau. "They have not ceased to put us on guard against the nobles of Cinq-Cygne, and have told us that sooner or later they would commit some violent act."

Sure of the activity of the prefect of the Aube, who sent into all the prefectures surrounding that of Troyes messengers to find traces of the five masked men and the senator, Lechesneau commenced by establishing the bases of his examination. This work was rapidly done by two judicial heads, which were as able as those of Grévin and the justice of the peace. The justice of the peace, named Pigoult, a former clerk in the office in which Malin and Grévin had studied pettifoggery in Paris, was appointed, three months afterward, president of the tribunal of Arcis. In that which concerned Michu, Lechesneau knew of the threats made by

this man to Monsieur Marion and of the ambush from which the senator had escaped in his park. These two facts, one of which was the consequence of the other, were to be the premises of the present crime and designated so well the former guard as the chief of the offenders, that Grévin, his wife, Violette and Madame Marion, declared that they had recognized among the five masked individuals a man exactly like Michu. The color of the hair and beard, the short, thick body of the individual rendered his mask almost useless. Who but Michu, moreover, could have opened the wicket of Cinq-Cygne with a key? The guard and his wife who had returned from Arcis and were interrogated, testified that they had locked the two gates. The gates, which were examined by the justice of the peace, assisted by his clerk and the rural guard, had shown no trace of violence.

"When we dismissed him, he kept the duplicate keys of the château," said Grévin. "He must have meditated some desperate deed, for he sold his property in twenty days, and collected the money in my office on the day before yesterday."

"They have saddled him with everything!" exclaimed Lechesneau, struck by this fact. "He has shown himself their mere tool."

Who could have known the different parts of the château better than the De Simeuses and the D'Hauteserres? Not one of the assailants made a mistake in his searches; they went everywhere with certainty, which proved that the band knew

exactly what they wanted, and, above all, knew where to find it. None of the closets left open had been forced. So the offenders had keys; and, strange thing! they did not commit the most trifling theft. Theft, then, was out of the question. In short, Violette, after having recognized the horses of the château of Cinq-Cygne, had found the countess in ambush before the guard's pavilion. From this agreement of facts and depositions resulted, for the least prejudiced court, presumptions of guilt on the part of the De Simeuses, the D'Hauteserres and Michu, which developed into certainty for a director of the jury. Now, what did they intend to do with the future Comte de Gondreville? Force him to a retrocession of his estate, for the acquisition of which the manager announced, from 1799, that he had the funds? Here the aspect of everything changed.

The learned criminal lawyer asked himself what could be the object of the active searches made in the château. Were it a question of vengeance, the offenders could have killed Malin. Perhaps the senator was dead and buried. The kidnapping implied, nevertheless, sequestration. Why sequestration after the searches accomplished at the château? It was certainly folly to believe that the kidnapping of a dignitary of the Empire would remain long a secret! The rapidity with which the news of this crime spread, annulled the advantages to be derived from it.

To these objections Pigoult responded that justice

was never able to divine the motives of criminals. In all criminal trials there were facts mutually obscure between the judge and the criminal; the conscience had depths into which human light penetrated only by the confession of the culprits.

Grévin and Lechesneau shook their heads as a sign of assent, without, however, ceasing to keep their eyes on those obscurities which they were endeavoring to clear up.

"The Emperor has, however, pardoned them," said Pigoult to Grévin and Madame Marion; "they have been stricken from the list of the proscribed, although they were in the last conspiracy hatched against him!"

Lechesneau, without further delay, hastened all his gendarmerie into the forest and valley of Cinq-Cygne, and ordered that Giguët should be accompanied by the justice of the peace, who became by the terms of the Code his judicial and auxiliary officer of police; he instructed him to collect in the commune of Cinq-Cygne the elements of the examination, to proceed, if necessary, with the interrogatories; and, in order to expedite matters, he rapidly dictated and signed the order for Michu's arrest, against whom the charges appeared to be clear. After the departure of the gendarmes and the justice of the peace, Lechesneau resumed the important work of issuing warrants for the arrest of the De Simeuses and D'Hauteserres. According to the Code, these warrants were required to contain all charges made

against the offenders. Giguet and the justice of the peace went so rapidly to Cinq-Cygne that they met the domestics of the château returning from Troyes. Arrested and taken before the mayor, where they were interrogated, each of them, ignorant of the importance of this reply, said artlessly that they had, the day before, received permission to go and pass the day at Troyes. To a question of the justices of the peace, each replied alike that mademoiselle had offered them this amusement of which they had not dreamed. These depositions appeared so grave to the justice of the peace, that he sent the Egyptian to Gondreville to request Lechesneau to come himself and proceed to arrest the noblemen of Cinq-Cygne, in order to operate simultaneously, for he repaired to Michu's farm to catch the pretended chief of the malefactors. These new elements appeared so decisive that Lechesneau left at once for Cinq-Cygne, requesting Grévin to preserve carefully the marks left by the horses' shoes in the park. The director of the jury knew what pleasure would be occasioned at Troyes by his procedure against former noblemen, enemies of the people, become enemies of the Emperor. With such impressions, a magistrate easily takes simple presumptions for evident proofs. Nevertheless, in going from Gondreville to Cinq-Cygne in the senator's own carriage, Lechesneau, who would have certainly made a great magistrate without the passion to which he owed his disgrace, for the Emperor became prudish, found the audacity

of the young men and Michu very foolish and little in harmony with the spirit of *Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne*. He inwardly believed in intentions different from those which aimed at extorting a retrocession of Gondreville from the senator. In everything, even in the magistracy, there exists what it is necessary to call the conscience of the calling. Lechesneau's perplexities resulted from this conscience, which every man employs in the discharge of duties which are agreeable to him, and which savants bring to bear on science, artists on art, and judges on justice. Moreover, judges, perhaps, offer more guarantees to the accused than juries. The magistrate relies on the laws of reason only, while the juror allows himself to be carried away by the waves of sentiment. The director of the jury put several questions to himself for the purpose of finding satisfactory solutions for even the arrest of the offenders. Although the news of the kidnapping of Malin already agitated the town of Troyes, it was still unknown in Arcis at eight o'clock, for every one was at supper when they came for the gendarmerie and the justice of the peace; in fine, no one knew of it at *Cinq-Cygne*, the valley and château of which were for the second time surrounded, but this time by the court and not by the police. Compromises possible with the one are often impossible with the other.

To be strictly obeyed, Laurence had only to ask Marthe, Catherine and the Durieus to remain in the château and not go out or look out. On

each trip the horses stood in the deep road in front of the break, and from there Robert and Michu, the most robust of the band, had been able to secretly transport the sacks through the break in a cellar situated under the staircase of the tower called *Mademoiselle*. On arriving at the *château* about half-past five, the four noblemen and Michu at once commenced to bury the gold. Laurence and the D'Hauteserres thought it advisable to wall up the cellar. Michu undertook this work with the aid of Gothard, who ran to the farmhouse to get some sacks of plaster, left there after its construction, and Marthe returned home to give the sacks secretly to Gothard. The farmhouse, built by Michu, was on the eminence from which he had previously seen the gendarmes, and which was reached by the deep road. Michu, who was very hungry, worked so fast, that toward half-past seven he had finished his task. He returned quickly in order to intercept Gothard, who was to bring the last sack of plaster, which he thought he needed. His house was already surrounded by the rural guard of *Cinq-Cygne*, the justice of the peace, his clerk and three gendarmes, who were concealed, and allowed him to enter on hearing him coming.

Michu met Gothard with the sack on his shoulder and shouted to him at a distance: "It's finished, boy, take it back, come and take dinner with us."

Michu, his face covered with sweat, and his clothes soiled with plaster and particles of the muddy mill stones, taken from the break, entered

joyously the kitchen of his house, where Marthe and her mother were serving the soup in anticipation of his arrival.

At the moment that Michu turned the spigot of the cistern to wash his hands, the justice of the peace presented himself, accompanied by his clerk and the rural guard.

"What do you wish, Monsieur Pigoult?" asked Michu.

"In the name of the Emperor and of the law, I arrest you!" said the justice of the peace.

The three gendarmes then showed themselves, bringing in Gothard.

On seeing the embroidered chapeau, Marthe and her mother exchanged a look of terror.

"Ah, bah! and for what?" asked Michu, who seated himself at his table, saying to his wife: "Give me something to eat, I am dying of hunger."

"You know as well as we do," said the justice of the peace, who motioned to his clerk to commence proceedings, after having shown the warrant of arrest to the farmer.

"Well, you appear astonished, Gothard! Are you going to take dinner, yes or no?" said Michu. "Let them write their nonsense."

"You know the condition in which your clothing is?" said the justice of the peace. "You do not deny the words which you addressed to Gothard in your yard?"

Michu, served by his wife, who was astonished at his coolness, ate with the avidity which hunger

provokes, and did not reply. His mouth was full and his heart free from guilt. Gothard's appetite was suspended by a horrible fear.

"Come," whispered the rural guard, "what have you done with the senator? To listen to the officers of justice, it's going to be an affair of capital punishment for you."

"Oh! my God!" exclaimed Marthe, who caught the last words and fell as if thunderstruck.

"Violette has played some villainous trick on us!" exclaimed Michu, recalling Laurence's words.

"Ah! you know, then, that Violette saw you?" said the justice of the peace.

Michu bit his lips and resolved to say no more. Gothard imitated this reserve. Seeing that his efforts to make him talk were useless, and having a knowledge, moreover, of what they called in the country Michu's perversity, the justice of the peace ordered his hands to be tied, as well as Gothard's, and had them taken to the château of Cinq-Cygne, where he went to rejoin the director of the jury.

The noblemen and Laurence were too hungry and too eager for dinner to delay it by giving any time to their toilet. She in her riding-habit and they in breeches of white skin, Hessian boots, and jackets of green cloth, entered and found in the salon Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre, who were quite uneasy. The old man had remarked a going to and fro and especially a want of confidence in him, for Laurence had not been able to submit

him to the orders given to the domestics. Then, at a moment when one of his sons had avoided replying to him by retiring, he went to his wife and said:

"I am afraid that Laurence is still cutting out work for us!"

"What kind of a hunt have you had to-day?" said Madame d'Hauteserre to Laurence.

"Ah! you will learn some day of the bad deed in which your sons have taken part," she laughingly replied.

Although said in jest, these words made the old lady shudder. Catherine announced dinner. Laurence gave her arm to Monsieur d'Hauteserre and smiled at the prank which she played on her cousins in forcing one of them to offer his arm to the old lady, who according to their agreement, was transformed into an oracle.

The Marquis de Simeuse accompanied Madame d'Hauteserre to the table. The situation then became so solemn that the *Benediction* finished, Laurence and her two cousins experienced violent palpitations of the heart. Madame d'Hauteserre, who was serving, was struck with the anxiety depicted on the visages of the two Simeuses and with the altered appearance expressed by Laurence's meek countenance.

"Something extraordinary has occurred!" she exclaimed, looking at each of those present.

"To whom are you speaking?" said Laurence.

"To you all," replied the old lady.

"As for me, mother," said Robert, "I am as hungry as a wolf."

Madame d'Hauteserre, still troubled, offered to the Marquis de Simeuse a plate which she intended for the younger.

"I am like your mother, I am always making mistakes, notwithstanding your cravats. I thought I was serving your brother," said she to him.

"You are serving him better than you think," said the younger, becoming pale. "There he is, the Comte de Cinq-Cygne."

This poor fellow, who was so gay, became sad forever: but he had the strength to look at Laurence, smile and repress his mortal regrets. In an instant the lover was lost in the brother.

"What! the countess has made her choice?" exclaimed the old lady.

"No," said Laurence, "we left it to chance and you were the instrument."

She related the agreement made in the morning. The elder Simeuse, who saw the increasing paleness of his brother's face, felt at times as if he would be compelled to cry out: "Marry her, I will go away and die!" At the moment when the dessert was served, the inhabitants of Cinq-Cygne heard a knocking at the window of the dining-room on the garden side. The elder of the D'Hauteserres went and admitted the curé, whose trousers had been torn in climbing the wall of the park.

"Flee! they are coming to arrest you."

"For what?"

"I do not yet know, but they are proceeding against you."

These words were received with general laughter.

"We are innocent!" exclaimed the noblemen.

"Innocent or guilty," said the curé, "mount your horses and gain the frontier. There you will be able to prove your innocence. They reconsider a conviction in contumacy, they do not reconsider a conviction in the presence of the defendants obtained by popular passions and prepared by prejudice. Remember the remark of the President de Harlay: 'If they accused me of having carried away the towers of Nôtre Dame, I would commence by taking flight!' "

"But to flee, is it not to confess one's self guilty?" said the Marquis de Simeuse.

"Don't run away!—" said Laurence.

"Sublime folly always," said the curé in despair. "If I had the power of God, I would carry you away. But if they find me here in this condition, they will turn against you and me this singular visit; I shall escape by the same way I came. Consider it! you have yet time. The officers of justice have not thought of the party wall of the parsonage and you are surrounded on all sides."

The echo of the steps of a body of men and the clanging of the gendarmes' sabres filled the courtyard and reached the dining-room a few minutes after the departure of the poor curé, who had no more success in his efforts to advise them than the Marquis de Chargebœuf had.

"Our common existence," said the younger Simeuse in a melancholy tone to Laurence, "is a monstrosity and we experience a monstrous love. This monstrosity has won your heart. Perhaps it is because the laws of nature are overthrown in them, that twins, whose history has been preserved, have all been unfortunate. As to us, see with what persistency fate pursues us. There is your decision fatally retarded."

Laurence was stupefied: she heard humming in her ears these words, sinister for her, pronounced by the director of the jury:

"In the name of the Emperor and of the law, I arrest Messieurs Paul-Marie and Marie-Paul de Simeuse, Adrien and Robert d'Hauteserre. These gentlemen," he added, pointing out to those who accompanied him traces of mud on the clothing of the prisoners, "will not deny that they have passed a part of to-day on horseback?"

"Of what do you accuse them?" asked Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne haughtily.

"You are not arresting mademoiselle?" said Giguet.

"I shall release her on bail, until a fuller examination of the charges against her shall have been made."

Goulard offered bail, asking simply of the countess her word of honor not to make her escape. Laurence withered the former whipper-in of the House of Simeuse with a look full of haughtiness, which made of that man a mortal enemy, and a tear came from

his eyes, one of those tears of rage which disclose a hell of suffering. The four noblemen exchanged a terrible look and remained motionless. Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre, fearing that they had been deceived by the four young men and by Laurence, were in a state of indescribable stupor. Nailed to their chairs, these parents who saw their children torn from them, after having undergone so much apprehension for them, and after having recovered them, looked without seeing, listened without hearing.

"Is it necessary to ask you to become my bail, Monsieur d'Hauteserre?" cried Laurence to her former guardian, who was aroused by this cry, which sounded to him clear and startling, like the blast of the trumpet of the last judgment.

The old man wiped away the tears which came to his eyes; he understood all and said to his relative in a feeble voice:

"Pardon, countess;—you know that I belong to you body and soul."

Lechesneau, struck at first by the tranquillity of these culprits who were dining, returned to his first views as to their guilt when he saw the stupor of the parents and the thoughtful air of Laurence, who was trying to unravel the snare which had been laid for them.

"Gentlemen," said he politely, "you are too well bred to make a useless resistance; follow me, all four, to the stables, where it will be necessary to remove your horses' shoes, which will become

important instruments in the trial, and will prove, perhaps, your innocence or your guilt. You will also come, mademoiselle—”

The farrier of Cinq-Cygne and his journeyman had been notified to come in the capacity of experts. While the work was going on in the stables, the justice of the peace brought in Gothard and Michu. The work of removing the shoes from each horse and of collecting and marking them, in order to proceed to compare them with the marks left in the park by the horses of the authors of the crime, took some time. Nevertheless, Lechesneau, informed of the arrival of Pigoult, left the accused with the gendarmes and repaired to the dining-room to dictate his official report; the justice of the peace pointed out to him the condition of Michu's garments, relating at the same time the circumstances of his arrest.

“They have killed the senator and imbedded him in some wall,” said Pigoult to Lechesneau in conclusion.

“Now, I am afraid of it,” replied the magistrate.

“Where did you take the plaster?” said he to Gothard.

Gothard commenced to whimper.

“The law frightens him,” said Michu, whose eyes flamed like those of a lion caught in a net.

All the domestics of the house detained at the mayor's office, then arrived; they crowded the antechamber, in which Catherine and the Durieus were crying, and learned from them the importance

of the answers they had given. To every question asked by the director and the justice of the peace, Gothard replied with sobs; while blubbering, he simulated a convulsive fit which shocked them, and they left him. The little rogue, seeing that he was no longer watched, looked and smiled at Michu, who gave him a look of approval. Lechesneau left the justice of peace to go and hurry the experts.

"Monsieur Pigoult," said Madame d'Hauteserre finally, "can you explain to me the cause of these arrests?"

"These gentlemen are accused of having forcibly carried away and confined the senator, for we do not suppose that they have killed him, notwithstanding appearances."

"And what punishment would the authors of this crime incur?" asked the old man D'Hauteserre.

"Why, as the laws which have not been annulled by the present Code will remain in force, it is capital punishment," replied the justice of the peace.

"Capital punishment!" exclaimed Madame d'Hauteserre, who fainted.

The curé presented himself at this moment with his sister, who called Catherine and Durieu's wife to her.

"But we have not seen him, your cursed senator!" exclaimed Michu.

"Madame Marion and Madame Grévin, Monsieur Grévin, the senator's valet and Violette, cannot say as much of you," replied Pigoult with the bitter smile of the satisfied magistrate.

"I know not what to make of this," said Michu,

whom this reply struck with astonishment, and who, from that time, commenced to believe himself involved with his masters in some plot contrived against them.

At this moment, everyone returned from the stables. Laurence ran to Madame d'Hauteserre, who recovered consciousness and said:

"It is capital punishment!"

"Capital punishment!—" repeated Laurence, looking at the four noblemen.

This remark spread dismay of which Giguet took advantage, like a man trained by Corentin.

"Everything may yet be arranged," said he, leading the Marquis de Simeuse into a corner of the dining-room, "perhaps, it is only a joke? What the deuce! You have been soldiers. Soldiers understand one another. What have you done with the senator? If you have killed him there's an end of it; but if you have confined him, give him up! you see that your scheme has failed. I am certain that the director of the jury, in accord with the senator, will smother any prosecution."

"We are absolutely ignorant of what you wish to know," said the Marquis de Simeuse.

"If you talk in that way, it will go hard with you," said the lieutenant.

"Dear cousin," said the Marquis de Simeuse to Laurence, "we are going to prison, but be not alarmed, we shall return in a few hours. There are in this affair misunderstandings which are going to be explained."

"I wish it may be so, gentlemen," said the magistrate, making a sign to Giguët to take away the four noblemen, Gothard and Michu. "Don't take them to Troyes," said he to the lieutenant, "keep them at your post in Arcis; they must be present to-morrow at daybreak, when we are to determine whether or not their horses' shoes made the impressions left in the park." After questioning Catherine, Monsieur and Madame d'Hautesserre and Laurence, Lechesneau and Pigoult took their departure. The Durieus, Catherine and Marthe declared that they had only seen their masters at breakfast; Monsieur d'Hautesserre declared that he had seen them at three o'clock. When at midnight, Laurence found herself between Monsieur and Madame d'Hautesserre, before the Abbé Goujet and his sister, without the four young men, who for eighteen months were the life of that château, her love and her joy, she maintained, for a long time, a silence which no one ventured to break. Affliction was never more profound or complete. At last they heard a sigh, they looked.

Marthe, forgotten in a corner, arose, saying:

"Death! madame—they will kill them, notwithstanding their innocence."

"What have you done?" said the curé.

Laurence went out without replying. In the midst of this unforeseen disaster, she had need of solitude to regain her strength.

III

A POLITICAL TRIAL UNDER THE EMPIRE

*

At a distance of thirty-four years, during which three great revolutions have occurred, only old men can now recall the unprecedented uproar caused in Europe by the kidnapping of a senator of the French Empire. No trial, save those of Trumeau, the grocer of the Place Saint-Michel, and that of the widow Morin under the Empire; those of Fualdès and of Castaing under the Restoration; those of Madame Lafarge and of Fieschi under the present government, equaled in interest and curiosity that of the young men accused of kidnapping Malin. Such an offense against a member of the Senate provoked the Emperor's anger, whom they informed of the arrest of the offenders, immediately after the perpetration of the offense and the negative result of the examination. The forest, which was thoroughly searched, the Aube and the surrounding departments, which were traversed in every direction, did not offer the least indication of the passage or confinement of the Comte de Gondreville. The chief-justice, summoned by Napoléon, went, after having been informed of the facts of the case by the minister of the police, and explained to him

Malin's position with respect to the Simeuses. The Emperor, at that time occupied with weighty matters, found the solution of the affair in the antecedent facts.

"These young men are insane," said he. "A lawyer, like Malin, must retract every act done under compulsion. Watch these nobles in order to know how they will proceed to release the Comte de Gondreville."

He commanded them to proceed with the greatest celerity in an affair in which he saw an attack upon his institutions, a fatal example of resistance to the consequences of the Revolution, a blow at the great question of national property, and an obstacle to that fusion of parties which was the constant pre-occupation of his domestic policy. Finally, he found himself deceived by those young men, who had promised to live peaceably.

"Fouché's prediction has been realized," he exclaimed, recalling the remark which escaped two years before from his then minister of police, who had been influenced to make it by the impression made on him by Corentin's report with respect to Laurence.

We cannot imagine under a constitutional government, in which no one interests himself in the commonwealth, which is blind and dumb, ungrateful and cold, the zeal which a word from the Emperor infused into his political or administrative machinery. This powerful will seemed to communicate itself to things as well as to men. His remarks once made,

the Emperor, surprised by the coalition of 1806, forgot the affair. He thought of coming battles to fight and occupied himself with massing his regiments with a view of striking a great blow at the heart of the Prussian monarchy. But his desire to see justice promptly done found a powerful vehicle in the uncertainty which affected the position of all the magistrates of the Empire. At this time Cambacérès, in his capacity of arch-chancellor, and chief-justice Régnier, were taking the necessary measures for the institution of courts of first instance, of imperial courts and of the court of appeal; they agitated the question of costumes, to which Napoléon attached so much importance and with so much reason. They looked over the personnel and searched for the remains of the parliaments which had been abolished. Naturally, the magistrates of the department of the Aube thought that a display of zeal in the affair of the kidnapping of the Comte de Gondreville would be an excellent recommendation. Napoléon's suppositions became, at that time, certainties for courtlings and the masses.

Peace still reigned over the Continent and admiration for the Emperor was universal in France; he cajoled interests, vanities, persons, in fine, everything, even memories. This enterprise appeared then to everyone to be a blow aimed at the public welfare. Thus, the poor, innocent noblemen were covered with general opprobrium. In small numbers and confined to their estates, the nobles deplored this affair among themselves, but

not one dared to open his mouth. How, in fact, could the storm of public opinion be opposed? All over the department, the bodies of the eleven persons killed in 1792, by shots fired through the Venetian blinds of the Hôtel de Cinq-Cygne, were exhumed, and used to provoke an overwhelming feeling against the accused. People feared that the daring *émigrés* would resort to any violence against the purchasers of their property, in order to prepare for its restitution by thus protesting against an unjust spoliation. These noble people were then treated as brigands, thieves and assassins, and Michu's complicity became especially fatal to them. This man, who had cut off, he or his father-in-law, all the heads which fell in the department during the Terror, was the object of the most ridiculous stories. The exasperation was so much the more intense as nearly all the functionaries of the Aube had been appointed through Malin's influence. No generous voice was raised to protest against the public clamor. In fine, the unfortunate men had no legal means of fighting against prejudices; for in submitting to jurors, both the elements of the indictment and the judgment, the Code of Brumaire year IV, had not been able to give to the accused the great guarantee of appeal upon the ground of legitimate doubt. The third day after the arrest, the masters and domestics of the château of Cinq-Cygne were summoned to appear before the jury of indictment. They left Cinq-Cygne in care of the farmer, who was under the direction of the Abbé Goujet

and his sister, who fixed their residence there. Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre went and occupied the little house which Durieu had in one of the long and broad faubourgs which are seen around the town of Troyes. Laurence's heart was oppressed when she discovered the fury of the masses, the malignity of the bourgeoisie and the hostility of the administration by several of those little things which always happen to the relatives of the persons implicated in a criminal affair in the provincial towns where the trial takes place. Instead of words full of compassion and encouragement, conversations were heard in which horrible desires of vengeance were expressed; there were manifestations of hatred instead of the acts of strict politeness, or of the reserve commanded by decency, and especially, an isolation which affects ordinary men, and which is so much the more quickly felt, as misfortune excites distrust. Laurence, who had recovered all her strength, relied on the clearness of innocence and despised the crowd too much to be alarmed at the silent dislike with which they received her. She sustained the courage of Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre, while thinking of the judicial battle, which, considering the rapidity of the proceedings, was soon to commence before the criminal court. But she was to receive a blow which she did not expect, and which diminished her courage. In the midst of this disaster and in face of the general exasperation, at the moment in which this family

was, as it were, in a desert, a man suddenly loomed up before Laurence's eyes and displayed all the beauty of his character.

The day following that on which the indictment, approved by the formula: *Yes, there is cause*, which the foreman of the jury wrote at the bottom of the document, was sent to the public prosecutor and when the order of arrest issued against the accused had been converted into a writ in virtue of which they were taken into custody, the Marquis de Chargebœuf came courageously in his old calèche to the aid of his young relative. Foreseeing the promptitude of the court, the head of this great family hastened to Paris, whence he brought one of the most experienced and honest lawyers of the olden time, Bordin, who was, at Paris, the counsel of the nobility for ten years, and whose successor was the celebrated lawyer Derville. This worthy lawyer at once chose for his assistant the grandson of a former president of the parliament of Normandy, who was destined for the magistracy, and whose studies were pursued under his direction. This young advocate, to employ a title which had been abolished, but which the Emperor was going to revive, was, in fact, appointed assistant to the attorney-general at Paris after the present trial and became one of our most distinguished magistrates. Monsieur de Granville accepted this defense as affording an opportunity for brilliantly commencing his professional career. At that epoch, advocates were replaced by semi-official defenders. Thus the right

of defense was not restricted, all citizens could plead the cause of innocence; but the accused took, nevertheless, former advocates to defend them. The old marquis, alarmed by the ravages which suffering had made in Laurence, was worthy of admiration for his good judgment and propriety. He did not allude to the advice he gave them, and which was completely thrown away; he presented Bordin as an oracle whose counsel was to be followed to the letter, and the young De Granville as a defender in whom they could have entire confidence.

Laurence extended her hand to the old marquis and shook his with a warmth which charmed him.

"You were right," said she.

"Are you now willing to listen to my advice?" he asked.

The young countess as well as Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre made a sign of assent.

"Well, come to my house, it is in the centre of the town, near the court; you and your advocates, you will find yourselves better there than here, where you are crowded and too far from the field of battle. You would have to go through the town every day."

Laurence accepted; the old gentleman took her and Madame d'Hauteserre to his house, which was that of the advocates and inhabitants of Cinq-Cygne as long as the trial lasted. After dinner, the doors having been closed, Bordin asked Laurence to relate exactly, all the circumstances of the affair, and requested her to omit no detail, although some of

the anterior facts had been told Bordin and his young assistant by the marquis during the journey from Paris to Troyes. Bordin listened, his feet at the fire, without assuming the least importance. The young advocate could not help being divided between his admiration for Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne and the attention which he owed to the elements of the cause.

"Is that really all?" asked Bordin, when Laurence had related the events of the drama, which were such as have been described in this recital up to the present time.

"Yes," she replied.

The most profound silence reigned for some moments in the drawing-room of the Hôtel de Chargebœuf where this scene occurred, which was one of the most serious that takes place in life, and also one of the rarest. Every process is judged by the advocates in advance of the judges, just as the death of a patient is anticipated by the physicians, before the struggle, which the latter will maintain against nature and the former against justice. Laurence, Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre and the marquis had their eyes riveted on the face of the old lawyer, which was serious, venerable and deeply furrowed by small-pox, and they awaited his words that were to pronounce sentence of life or death. Monsieur d'Hauteserre wiped drops of sweat from his forehead. Laurence observed the young advocate and found his face sad.

"Well, my dear Bordin?" said the marquis,

extending him his snuff-box, from which the lawyer helped himself in a distracted way.

Bordin rubbed the calves of his legs, clothed in stockings of coarse black silk, for he was in black cloth knee breeches, and wore a coat which approached in its cut the coats called *à la française*; he glanced at his clients with his shrewd eyes, in which there was an expression of anxiety which chilled them.

"Is it necessary to dissect that for you," said he, "and to speak to you frankly?"

"Go on, monsieur!" said Laurence.

"All the good you have done will be used against you," said the old practitioner. "We cannot save your relatives, we can only lessen their punishment. The sale which you ordered Michu to make of his property, will be taken for the most evident proof of your criminal intentions with respect to the senator. You sent your domestics to Troyes for the express purpose of being alone, and that will be so much more plausible, as it is the truth. The elder of the D'Hauteserres made a terrible remark to Beauvisage, which ruins you all. You made another in your courtyard, which proved a long time before, your ill-will against Gondreville. As to you, you were on watch at the time the deed was committed; if they do not prosecute you, it is for the purpose of excluding an element of interest from the affair."

"The cause is not tenable," said Monsieur de Granville.

"It is so much the less so," replied Bordin, "as we cannot tell the truth. Michu, Messieurs de Simeuse and D'Hauteserre, must simply maintain that they went into the forest with you, that they spent a part of the day there, and that they returned to breakfast at Cinq-Cygne. But, if we can establish that you were all there at three o'clock, when the crime was committed, who are your witnesses? Marthe, the wife of one of the accused, the Durieus and Catherine, domestics in your service, Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre, father and mother of two of the accused! These witnesses are without value, the law does not admit their evidence against you, common sense rejects it when offered in your favor. If you should unfortunately say that you went into the forest to find eleven hundred thousand francs, you would see all of the accused sent to the galleys as thieves. The public prosecutor, jurors, judges, audience and France, would believe that you had obtained that gold at Gondreville, and that you had confined the senator in order to accomplish your purpose. In admitting the indictment, such as it is at present, the affair is not clear; but in its pure verity, it would become transparent; the jurors would explain by the robbery all the obscure parts, for royalist, to-day, means brigand! This case presents a vengeance which is admissible in the political situation. The accused incur the penalty of death, but it is not dishonorable in the eyes of all; whereas, by bringing in the removal of the specie, which will never appear warrantable, you

will lose the benefit of the interest which attaches to those condemned to death, when their crime appears excusable. At the first moment, when you were able to show your hiding-places, the plan of the forest, the tin cylinders and gold to prove the employment of the day, it would have been possible to escape before impartial magistrates; but in the present condition of things, it is necessary to keep silent. God grant that none of the six accused has compromised the cause, but we shall take care to turn their examinations to account."

Laurence wrung her hands in despair and raised her eyes to heaven with a disconsolate look, for she then perceived in all its depth, the precipice over which her cousins had fallen. The marquis and the young advocate approved Bordin's terrible remarks. The good man D'Hauteserre wept.

"Why did you not listen to the Abbé Goujet, who wished you to escape?" said Madame d'Hauteserre, exasperated.

"Ah!" exclaimed the old lawyer, "if you were able to save them and did not do it, you have slain them yourselves. Contumacy gives time. With time the innocent explain affairs. This seems to me the most obscure matter that I have ever seen in my life, during which I have unraveled many plots."

"It is inexplicable to every one, even to us," said Monsieur de Granville. "If the accused are innocent, the deed has been done by others. Five persons do not come into a country as if by magic, do not procure horses shod like those of the accused,

do not borrow their resemblance and do not put Malin in a pit for the express purpose of ruining Michu, the D'Hauteserres and the De Simeuses. The unknown, the really guilty, had some interest in putting themselves in the shoes of five innocent persons; to track and find them it would be necessary to have, like the government, as many officers and eyes as there are communes in a radius of twenty leagues."

"That is impossible," said Bordin. "It's not worth while to think of it. Since societies have invented justice, they have never discovered a means of giving to innocence a power equal to that which the magistrate brings to bear against crime. Justice is not reciprocal. The defense, which has neither spies nor police, does not dispose of the social power in favor of its clients. Innocence has reasoning alone for its defense; and the reasoning, which may strike the judge, is often powerless with the prejudiced minds of jurors. The whole country is against you. The eight jurors who have sanctioned the indictment were proprietors of confiscated estates. We shall have among the jurors, to try the cause, men who will be, like the first, purchasers, vendors of national property or employés. In fine, you will have a Malin jury! We must, moreover, have a complete system of defense, do not swerve from it and perish in your innocence. You will be convicted. We shall go to the court of appeal, and we shall try to remain there a long time. If in the interval, I can obtain evidence in your favor,

you will petition for a pardon. There is the outline of the affair and my advice. If we triumph,—for everything is possible in law,—it will be a miracle; but your advocate is, among all those whom I know, the most capable of performing this miracle, and I will aid him to do it.”

“The senator must have the key of this enigma,” said Monsieur de Granville, “for we always know who bears us malice and for what reason. I see him leaving Paris at the close of winter, coming to Gondreville, alone, without retinue, closeting himself with his notary, and delivering himself, so to speak, to five men, who seize him.”

“His conduct,” said Bordin, “is certainly as extraordinary as our own, to say the least. But, how, in face of a country imbittered against us, can we, accused as we are, become accusers? The favor and aid of the government and a thousand times more evidence than that ordinarily required would be necessary. I perceive there the most subtle premeditation on the part of our unknown adversaries, who know the relation of Michu and the Messieurs de Simeuse with respect to Malin. Not to utter a word! Not to commit robbery! There is prudence in that. I perceive everything but malefactors under those masks—But tell those things to the jurors whom they will give us!”

This perspicacity in private affairs, which renders certain advocates and certain magistrates so great, astonished and confounded Laurence; her heart was oppressed by that dreadful logic.

"In a hundred criminal affairs," said Bordin, "there are not ten which justice develops to their full extent and there is, perhaps, a good third of them the secrets of which are unknown to it. Ours is of the number of those which are inexplicable to the accused and the accuser, to justice and the public. As to the sovereign, he has other things to do besides helping Messieurs de Simeuse, even if they had not intended to overthrow him. But who the deuce bears Malin malice? and what design did they have upon him?"

Bordin and Monsieur de Granville looked at each other, they appeared to be doubting Laurence's veracity. This movement was for the young girl one of the severest of the thousand pangs of this affair; she gave the two lawyers a look which removed every painful suspicion.

The next day, the procedure was given to the defense, who were able to communicate with the accused. Bordin informed the family that like good people, they had borne themselves well, to employ a professional expression.

"Monsieur de Granville will defend Michu," said Bordin.

"Michu?—"exclaimed Monsieur de Chargebœuf, astonished at this change.

"He is the heart of the affair, and there is the danger," replied the old lawyer.

"If he is the most exposed, the thing appears to me just!" exclaimed Laurence.

"We see chances and we are going to study them

carefully," said Monsieur de Granville. "If we can save them, it will be because Monsieur d'Hauteserre told Michu to repair a post of the gate of the deep road, and that a wolf was seen in the forest; for all depends upon the pleadings before a criminal court, and the pleadings will turn upon small things, which you will see developed into great importance."

Laurence gave way to a feeling of inward despondency which must mortify the soul of all persons of action and thought, when the inutility of the action and thought is demonstrated to them. It was no longer a question of overthrowing a man or power with the aid of devoted followers, of fanatical sympathies enveloped in the shades of mystery; she saw the whole community arrayed against her and her cousins. A single individual does not take a prison by assault, they do not surrender prisoners in the heart of a hostile population and under the eyes of police made vigilant by the reputed audacity of the accused. Moreover, when the young advocate, alarmed at the stupor of this noble and generous girl, whom her physiognomy rendered still more stupid, endeavored to restore her courage, she replied to him:

"I will remain silent, I will suffer and wait—"

The accent, gesture and look, made of this reply one of those sublime things, which on a more extensive theatre would become celebrated. Some moments after, the good man d'Hauteserre said to the Marquis de Chargebœuf: "I have labored for my two unfortunate sons! I have already created

for them a government income of nearly eight thousand francs. If they had wished to enter the army, they would have risen to superior grades and would to-day be able to marry advantageously. Here are all my plans come to naught."

"How," said his wife, "can you think of their interests, when their honor and heads are at stake!"

"Monsieur d'Hauteserre thinks of everything," said the marquis.

While the inhabitants of Cinq-Cygne were awaiting the opening of the trial in the criminal court, and were soliciting permission to see the prisoners, without being able to obtain it, there occurred at the château with the utmost secrecy, an event of the greatest importance. Marthe had returned to Cinq-Cygne immediately after her deposition before the jury of indictment, which was so unimportant that she was not summoned before the criminal court by the public prosecutor. Like all persons of excessive sensibility, the poor woman remained seated in the salon, where she was bearing Made-moiselle Goujet company, in a state of stupor which was pitiful. For her, as for the curé and all those who did not know how the accused were employed on that day, their innocence appeared doubtful. At times, Marthe believed that Michu, her masters and Laurence, had committed some act of vengeance against the senator: the unfortunate woman knew sufficiently well Michu's devotion, to understand that he was, of all the accused, the most in danger, either on account of his antecedents or the part

which he might have taken in the execution of the affair. The Abbé Goujet, his sister and Marthe were lost in the probabilities to which this opinion gave rise; but by dint of meditating on them, they allowed their minds to accept any opinion whatever. The absolute doubt which Descartes requires, can no more obtain in the brain of man than a vacuum in nature, and the intellectual operation by which it would take place would be, like the pneumatic machine, an exceptional and monstrous condition. In any matter whatever, we believe in something. Now, Marthe was so fearful of the guilt of the accused that her apprehension was equivalent to a belief; and that condition of mind was fatal to her. Five days after the arrest of the noblemen, at the moment when she was going to bed, at ten o'clock at night, she was called into the courtyard by her mother, who arrived on foot from the farm.

"A workman from Troyes wishes to speak to you on the part of Michu and awaits you in the deep road," said she to Marthe.

Both passed through the break, which was the shortest way. In the obscurity of the night and road, it was impossible for Marthe to distinguish anything but the form of a person, which stood out against the darkness.

"Speak, madame, that I may know if you are really Madame Michu," said this person in a somewhat agitated voice.

"Certainly," said Marthe. "And what do you wish of me?"

"Good," said the unknown. "Give me your hand and don't be afraid of me. I come," he added, inclining to Marthe's ear, "on the part of Michu, to deliver a little message. I am one of the employés of the prison, and if my superiors noticed my absence, we should all be lost. Trust to me. In times past, your brave father placed me there. Michu has also counted on me."

He put a letter into Marthe's hand and disappeared in the direction of the forest without waiting for a reply. Marthe had something like a chill on thinking that she was going, without doubt, to learn the secret of the affair. She ran to the farm with her mother and shut herself up to read the following letter:

"MY DEAR MARTHE,

"You can count on the discretion of the man who will deliver this letter; he is unable to read or write, he is one of the most solid republicans of the conspiracy of Babeuf; your father often availed himself of his services, and he considers the senator a traitor. Now, my dear wife, the senator has been immured by us in the cellar in which we hid our masters. The wretched man has provisions for five days only, and as it is to our interest that he live, as soon as you have read these few words, supply him with food for at least five days. The forest is, of course, watched; take the same precautions we had for our young masters. Do not say a word to Malin, do not talk to him, and put on one of our masks, which you will find on one of the cellar steps. If you do not wish to endanger our heads, you will maintain the most absolute silence about the secret which I am forced to confide to you. Do not say a word to Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, she might *shirk the danger*. Have no fear

for me. We are sure of a successful issue in this affair, and, when it will be necessary, Malin will be our deliverer. Finally, after having read this letter, it is unnecessary to tell you to burn it, for it would cost me my head if they read a single line of it. I embrace you with more and more affection.

“MICHU.”

The existence of the cellar, situated under the eminence in the heart of the forest, was known only to Marthe, her son, Michu, the four noblemen and Laurence; at least, Marthe, to whom her husband had said nothing about his meeting with Peyrade and Corentin, was obliged to think so. So the letter, which, moreover, appeared to have been written and signed by him, could come from no one but him. Certainly, if Marthe had immediately consulted her mistress and her two lawyers, who were aware of the innocence of the accused, the wily attorney would have obtained some light with respect to the perfidious combinations which enveloped his clients; but Marthe, completely under the control of her first impulse, like most women, and convinced by those considerations which were obvious to her, threw the letter into the fireplace. However, moved by a singular flash of prudence, she drew from the fire the side of the letter which was not written on, took the first five lines, the sense of which could compromise no one, and sewed them in the bottom of her frock. Quite alarmed to know that the sufferer had fasted for twenty-four hours, she determined to supply him with wine, bread and meat from that night. Her curiosity as well

as her humanity did not allow her to defer it until the next day. She heated her oven and aided by her mother, made a pie of hares and ducks, a rice cake, roasted two chickens, took three bottles of wine, and made, herself, two loaves of bread. About half-past two o'clock in the morning, she started for the forest, carrying everything in a basket on her back, in company with Couraut, who on all these expeditions served as a scout with admirable intelligence. He scented strangers a long way off, and when he discovered their presence, he returned to his mistress, growling in a suppressed way, looking at her and turning his nose in the direction of danger.

Marthe arrived about three o'clock in the morning at the pond, where she left Couraut on sentry. After freeing the entrance, which took half an hour, she proceeded with a dark lantern to the door of the cellar, her face covered with a mask, which she had, in fact, found on a step. The detention of the senator seemed to have been premeditated a long time before. A hole a foot square, which Marthe had not previously seen, had been roughly made in the top of the iron door which closed the cellar; but in order that Malin might not be able with time and patience which are at the disposition of all prisoners, to slip the iron bar which fastened the door, they secured it with a padlock. The senator, who arose from his bed of moss, gave a sigh on seeing a masked face and divined that his deliverance had not yet been determined. He observed Marthe, so

far as the uncertain light of a dark-lantern permitted, and recognized her by her garments, her corpulence, and her movements; when she passed the pie through the hole, he let it fall and seized her hands, and with wonderful quickness he tried to take from her finger a wedding-ring and another given to her by *Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne*.

"You will not deny that it is you, my dear *Madame Michu*?" said he.

Marthe closed her hand as soon as she felt the senator's fingers and gave him a vigorous blow on the breast. Then, without saying a word, she went and cut a strong stick, on the end of which she extended to the senator the rest of the provisions.

"What do they require of me?" said he.

Marthe hastened away without replying. In returning home, she found herself, about five o'clock, on the edge of the forest and she was warned by *Couraut* of the presence of an intruder. She retraced her steps and went toward the pavilion where she had so long lived; but when she appeared on the avenue, she was seen at a distance by the rural guard of *Gondreville*; she then resolved to go right up to him.

"You are out very early, *Madame Michu*," said he in accosting her.

"We are so unfortunate," she replied, "that I am forced to do the work of a servant; I am going to *Bellache* to look for seeds."

"Have you no seeds at *Cinq-Cygne*?" said the guard.

Marthe did not reply. She went on, and arriving at the farmhouse of Bellache, she requested Beauvisage to give her several seeds for planting, saying that Monsieur d'Hauteserre has asked her to get them from him in order to renew the kinds he had. When Marthe had gone, the guard of Gondreville went to the farmhouse to know what Marthe wanted.

Six days after, Marthe, having become cautious, started at midnight to carry the provisions, so as not to be surprised by the guards, who were evidently watching the forest. After having the third time carried provisions to the senator, she was seized with a sort of terror on hearing the curé read the public examinations of the accused, for then the trial had commenced. She took the Abbé Goujet aside, and after having made him swear that he would keep secret what she was going to tell him, as if told in the confessional, she showed him the fragments of the letter which she had received from Michu, at the same time reciting its contents and initiating him in the secret of the dungeon in which the senator was imprisoned. The curé at once asked Marthe if she had any of her husband's letters, in order to be able to compare the writing. Marthe went home, where she found a summons to appear as a witness in the court. When she returned to the château, the Abbé Goujet and his sister had, likewise, been summoned at the request of the accused. They were, therefore, obliged to go to Troyes at once. Thus, all the personages of

this drama, and even those who were in a manner only the supernumeraries of it, were re-united on the scene where the destinies of the two families were then at stake.

There are few localities in France where justice derives from things that prestige which should always accompany it. After religion and royalty, is it not the grandest machine of communities? Everywhere, and even in Paris, the meanness of the locality, the wretched disposition of the premises and the neglect of decoration on the part of a nation, which is the vainest and most theatrical with respect to monuments that now exists, diminish the action of that enormous power. The arrangement is the same in almost all the cities. At the back of some long square hall, we see a desk, covered with green serge, placed on a platform, behind which the judges sit in common chairs. At the left is the public prosecutor's bench, and on the same side, along the wall is a long gallery, furnished with chairs for the jurors. In front of the jurors is another gallery in which there is a bench for the accused and the gendarmes who guard them. The clerk of the court sits at the end of the platform near a table, on which are placed the articles tending to prove criminality, called *pièces à conviction*. Before the institution of imperial courts, the commissioner of the government and the director of the jury had each a seat and a table, one at the right, the other at the left of the judges' desk. Two tipstaves move about a space in front of the judges which is reserved for the

witnesses. The counsel for the defense are at the foot of the gallery of the accused. A balustrade in wood connects the two galleries toward the other end of the room, and forms an inclosure in which are placed benches for the witnesses who have been heard and privileged spectators. Then, in front of the tribunal, over the door of entrance, there is always a wretched gallery which is reserved for the authorities and such women of the department as the president may select, the police of the court acting under his direction. The unprivileged public stand in the space which remains between the door of the room and the balustrade. This normal physiognomy of the French tribunals and the present courts of assize was that of the criminal court of Troyes.

*

In April 1806, neither the four judges and the presiding justice, who composed the court, nor the public prosecutor, nor the foreman of the jury, nor the commissioner of the government, nor the tipstaves, nor the counsel for the defense, no one, in fact, except the gendarmes, had any costume or distinctive mark to relieve the nakedness of the room and furniture and the rather poor appearance of the audience. The crucifix was missing and did not give its example either to the court or the accused. All was dismal and vulgar. The formal preparation, so necessary to the interest of society, is, perhaps, a consolation for the criminal. The eagerness of the public was what it has been and what it will be, so long as the customs are not reformed, so long as France does not admit that the admission of the public does not involve publicity, that the publicity given to the trial constitutes an affliction which is so exorbitant that if the legislator had been able to suspect it, he would not have inflicted it. Customs are often more cruel than the laws. Customs are the men, but the law is the reason of a country. Customs, which are not often right, outweigh the law. Crowds assembled around the court-house. As in all celebrated trials, the presiding justice was obliged to have the doors guarded by squads of soldiers. The spectators,

who were standing behind the balustrade, were so crowded that they were stifling. Monsieur de Granville, who defended Michu, Bordin, the defender of the De Simeuses, and an advocate from Troyes, who pleaded for the D'Hauteserres and Gothard, the least compromised of the six prisoners, were at their posts before the opening of the session, and their faces betokened confidence. As the physician does not permit the patient to discover any apprehension on his part, so the advocate always has for his client an expression full of hope. It is one of those rare cases in which falsehood becomes virtue. When the accused entered, friendly murmurs arose at the aspect of the four young men, who after twenty days of imprisonment passed in anxiety, appeared somewhat pale. The perfect resemblance of the twins excited the most powerful interest. Perhaps every one thought that nature was to exercise a special protection over one of its rarest curiosities, and all were tempted to make amends for the neglect of destiny toward them; their bearing, which was noble, frank and without the least sign of shame, but also without bravado, affected the women greatly. The four noblemen and Gothard appeared in the clothing which they wore on the day of their arrest; but Michu, whose clothing was a part of the *pièces à conviction*, had put on his best garments, a blue frock-coat, a vest of brown velvet *à la Robespierre*, and a white cravat. The poor man paid the penalty of his vicious look. When he cast his yellow, clear and profound glance

at the assembly, or gave a start, there was a responsive murmur of horror from those present. The audience was disposed to see the finger of God in his appearance on the bench of the accused, on which his father-in-law had made so many victims sit. This man who was truly great, looked at his masters, suppressing a smile of irony. He had the appearance of saying to them: "I am doing you harm." These five accused men exchanged affectionate greetings with their counsel. Gothard was still playing the idiot.

After the challenges sagaciously made by their lawyers, enlightened on this point by the Marquis de Chargebœuf, who was courageously seated near Bordin and Monsieur de Granville, and when the jury was formed and the indictment read, the accused were separated in order to proceed with their examinations. All answered with remarkable uniformity. After an excursion on horseback during the morning, in the forest, they returned at one o'clock to breakfast at Cinq-Cygne; after the repast, from three to half-past five, they went back to the forest. Such was the common ground of the accused, the variations of which proceeded from their special positions. When the presiding justice asked the Messieurs de Simeuse to give the reasons which led them to be abroad so early in the morning, they both declared that since their return they thought of buying back Gondreville and that with a view of treating with Malin, who had arrived the evening before, they started out with their

cousin and Michu, in order to examine the forest and have a basis for their offers. During that time the Messieurs D'Hauteserre, their cousin and Gothard had chased a wolf which the peasants had seen. If the director of the jury had followed the traces of their horses in the forest as carefully as he did those of the horses which had gone through the park of Gondreville, there would have been proof that their rides had been taken in parts far distant from the château.

The examination of the Messieurs d'Hauteserre confirmed the testimony of the Messieurs de Simeuse and was in harmony with their statements in the private examination. The necessity of justifying their excursions had suggested to each of the accused the idea of attributing them to hunting. Some peasants had noticed, a few days before, a wolf in the forest, and each of them took advantage of this as a pretext.

However, the public prosecutor pointed out contradictions between the first examinations, in which the Messieurs D'Hauteserre said that they had hunted all together, and the system adopted at the trial, which left the Messieurs D'Hauteserre and Laurence hunting while the Messieurs de Simeuse were estimating the value of the forest.

Monsieur de Granville remarked that the crime having been committed between two and half-past five o'clock, the accused should be believed when they explained the manner in which they had employed the morning.

The prosecutor replied that the accused had an interest in concealing the preparations to carry off and confine the senator.

The skill of the defense then became apparent to everyone. The judges, jurors and audience saw that the struggle for victory was going to be warmly contested. Bordin and Monsieur de Granville seemed to have foreseen everything. Innocence must give a clear and plausible account of its actions. The duty of the defense then, is to oppose a probable narrative to the improbable narrative of the prosecution. For the lawyer who considers his client innocent, the accusation becomes a fable. The public examination of the four noblemen sufficiently explained things in their favor. Thus far, everything was going well. But Michu's examination was more important and brought about the combat. Everyone then saw why Monsieur de Granville had preferred the defense of the servant to that of the masters.

Michu acknowledged his threats against Marion, but he denied the violence which people attributed to them. As to lying in wait for Malin, he said that he was simply walking in the park; the senator and Monsieur Grévin might have been frightened on seeing the muzzle of his gun and have supposed his position hostile, when it was inoffensive. He remarked that in the evening, a man who is not in the habit of hunting might think that a gun is pointed at him when carried on the shoulder uncocked. To justify the state of his clothing at the

time of his arrest, he said that he had fallen into the break while returning home.

"Not seeing distinctly enough to climb, I, as it were," said he, "collared the stones, which gave way under me when I was using them to ascend the bank of the deep road."

As to the plaster which Gothard carried to him, he replied, as he did in all his examinations, that it had been used to bed a post of the gate in the deep road.

The public prosecutor and the presiding justice asked him to explain how it happened that he was, at the same time, both in the break at the château and in the upper part of the deep road to bed a gate-post, especially when the justice of the peace, the gendarmes and the rural guard declared that they heard him coming from below. Michu replied that as Monsieur d'Hauteserre had reproached him for not having done this little job, to which he attached importance on account of the difficulties which this road might raise with the commune, he had gone to inform him that the gate was repaired.

Monsieur d'Hauteserre had, in fact, placed a gate in the upper part of the deep road, in order to prevent the commune from taking possession of it. On seeing what importance the state of his clothing and the plaster, the use of which could not be denied, assumed, Michu had invented this subterfuge. In justice, if truth sometimes resembles fable, fable, likewise, greatly resembles truth. The defense and the prosecution attached great value

to this circumstance, which became of leading importance through the efforts of the defense and the suspicions of the prosecution.

At the trial, Gothard, without doubt instructed by Monsieur de Granville, avowed that Michu had asked him to bring him some sacks of plaster, for up to that time he had always commenced to cry when questioned.

"Why did not you or Gothard immediately take the justice of the peace and the rural guard to that gate?" asked the prosecutor.

"I never dreamt that we should be charged with a capital offense," said Michu.

All the accused, except Gothard, were required to withdraw. When Gothard was alone, the presiding justice adjured him to speak the truth in his own behalf, as his simulated idiocy had ceased. No one of the jurors believed him imbecile. By remaining silent in presence of the court, he might expose himself to severe punishment; whereas, by speaking the truth, he would probably not be prosecuted. Gothard bawled, wavered, then he ended by saying that Michu had asked him to bring him several sacks of plaster; but every time he had met him in front of the farmhouse. They asked him how many sacks he had carried.

"Three," he replied.

A discussion arose between Gothard and Michu with a view of determining if there were three, counting that which he was carrying to him at the moment of arrest, which reduced the sacks to two,

or three besides the last. This discussion terminated in favor of Michu. For the jurors two sacks only were used; but they appeared to be already convinced on this point. Bordin and Monsieur de Granville judged it necessary to surfeit them with plaster and to fatigue them so completely that they would no longer understand anything. Monsieur de Granville presented conclusions tending to the appointment of experts to examine the condition of the gate.

"The director of the jury," said the advocate, "has been pleased to visit the spot, more with a view of discovering some subterfuge on Michu's part than of making a close examination, but he has, in our opinion, failed in his duty, and his fault must be to our advantage."

The court appointed experts, in fact, in order to know if one of the gate-posts had recently been imbedded in mortar. On his side, the public prosecutor wished to take advantage of this circumstance before the report of the survey.

"You chose," said he to Michu, "a time of the day when there is no light, from five to half-past six, to bed the post and you were all alone?"

"Monsieur d'Hauteserre had berated me."

"But," said the public prosecutor, "if you used the plaster on the gate, you had a mortar-board and a trowel? Now if you went so promptly and told Monsieur d'Hauteserre that you had executed his orders, it is impossible for you to explain why Gothard was still bringing you plaster. You must

have passed by your house and then you must have laid aside your tools and anticipated Gothard."

This crushing argument caused a horrible silence in the court-room.

"Come, confess it," said the prosecutor, "it was not a post that you buried—"

"Do you then believe that it was the senator?" said Michu in a profoundly ironical way.

Monsieur de Granville asked the prosecutor to formally explain himself on this leading point. Michu was charged with carrying off and confining the senator, and not with murdering him. Nothing could be more important than this question. The Code of Brumaire, year IV, forbade the public prosecutor to introduce any new count into the pleadings. He was obliged, under the penalty of nullity, to hold to the bill of indictment.

The prosecutor replied that Michu, the principal in the crime, and who in the interest of his masters had assumed all the responsibility, might have had occasion to shut up the entrance to the place, still unknown, where the senator was languishing.

Pressed with questions, harassed before Gothard, put in contradiction with himself, Michu struck the rail of the prisoners' gallery a heavy blow with his fist and said: "I had nothing to do with carrying off the senator, I am disposed to believe that his enemies have merely confined him: but, if he reappear, you will see that the plaster could have served no purpose in the affair."

"Well!" said the advocate, addressing the

prosecutor, "you have done more for the defense of my client than all I could have said."

The first session ended after this bold allegation, which surprised the jurors and gave the advantage to the defense. The advocates of the town and Bordin warmly congratulated the young lawyer. The public prosecutor, disturbed by this assertion, feared that he had fallen into a trap, and he had, in fact, walked into a snare very skilfully laid by the counsel for the defense, and in which Gothard had just admirably played his rôle. The wags of the town said that the affair had been plastered up, that the public prosecutor had botched his position, and that the De Simeuses were becoming as white as plaster. In France everything belongs to the domain of jest: it is queen there: people jest on the scaffold, at the Bérésina, at the barricades, and some Frenchman will, without doubt, jest at the grand assizes of the Last Judgment.

The following day they heard the witnesses for the prosecution: Madame Marion, Madame Grévin, Grévin, the senator's valet and Violette, whose depositions can be easily understood from the events. All recognized the five prisoners with more or less hesitation as to the four noblemen, but with certainty as to Michu. Beauvisage repeated the remarks which escaped from Robert d'Hauteserre. The peasant who came to buy the calf repeated the expression used by Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne. The experts having been heard, confirmed their reports as to the comparison of the impressions

of the shoes with those of the four noblemen's horses, which, according to the prosecution, were absolutely alike. This circumstance was naturally the object of a violent discussion between Monsieur de Granville and the public prosecutor. The advocate assailed the farrier of Cinq-Cygne and succeeded in establishing during the discussion that similar shoes had been sold, some days before, to individuals who were strangers in the country. The farrier declared, moreover, that he not only shod in this way the horses of the château of Cinq-Cygne, but also many others in the canton. In fine, the horse which Michu habitually used had been shod at Troyes, an extraordinary fact, and the impression of this shoe was not found among those examined in the park.

"Michu's double was ignorant of this circumstance," said Monsieur de Granville, eyeing the jurors, "and the prosecution has not established that we used one of the horses of the château."

He destroyed Violette's deposition in so far as it related to the resemblance of the horses, seen at a distance and from behind. Notwithstanding the incredible efforts of the advocate, the mass of the positive evidence was overwhelmingly against Michu. The prosecutor, the audience, the court and jurors, all felt, as the defense had apprehended, that the guilt of the servant involved that of the masters. Bordin already foresaw the knotty point of the trial when he gave Michu's defense to Monsieur de Granville; but the defense thus avowed

its secrets. Moreover, everything which concerned the former manager of Gondreville was of throbbing interest. Michu's bearing was superb. He displayed in this trial all the sagacity with which nature had endowed him; and by seeing him, the public recognized his superiority; but, astonishing thing! this seemed to indicate with greater certainty, Michu as the author of the crime. The witnesses for the defense, who were less important than those for the prosecution in the eyes of the jury and the law, appeared to do their duty and were heard, in a manner, for conscience sake. At first, neither Marthe nor Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre were sworn; then Catherine and the Durieus, in their capacity of domestics, were in the same position. Monsieur d'Hauteserre said, in effect, that he had given an order to Michu to repair the post. The declaration of the experts, who read at this time their report, confirmed the old nobleman's deposition, but they also sustained the director of the jury by declaring that it was impossible for them to determine when this work had been done; it might have been done several weeks or twenty days ago. The appearance of Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne excited the liveliest curiosity; but when she saw her cousins in the criminal gallery after twenty-three days of separation, she experienced such violent emotions that she appeared to be guilty. She had a horrible desire to be alongside of the twins, and was obliged, she said later, to use all her strength to repress the fury which impelled her to

kill the prosecutor, in order to be in the eyes of the world criminal, like them. She related artlessly, that in returning to Cinq-Cygne and seeing the smoke in the park, she thought there was a fire. For a long time she thought that this smoke came from burning weeds.

"However," said she, "I recalled, afterward, an incident to which I call the attention of the court: I found in the gimp of my riding-habit, and in the folds of my collar, fragments of what appeared to be burnt paper, which had been carried along by the wind."

"Was there considerable smoke?" asked Bordin.

"Yes," said Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, "I thought there was a conflagration."

"This may change the face of the trial," said Bordin. "I ask the court to order an immediate examination of the place where this fire occurred."

The presiding justice ordered the examination.

Grévin, recalled by the defense and questioned as to this circumstance, declared that he knew nothing about the matter. But between Bordin and Grévin looks were exchanged which mutually enlightened them.

"The case rests there," said the old lawyer to himself.

"They have it," thought the notary.

But on both sides, the two shrewd men thought that the investigation was useless. Bordin said to himself that Grévin would be as discreet as a wall, and Grévin congratulated himself on having had all

traces of the fire removed. To settle this point, which was accessory in the pleadings and which appeared puerile, but was leading in the justification which history owes these young men, the experts and Pigoult, appointed to visit the park, declared that they had not remarked any spot on which there was any mark of fire. Bordin had two workmen called, who testified that they had turned up, by order of the guard, a portion of the meadow where the grass was burnt; but they said that they had not noticed from what substance the cinders came. The guard, recalled at the request of the defense, said that he had received from the senator, at the time he passed by the château on his way to see the masquerade at Arcis, the order to plough up that part of the meadow which the senator had noticed in the morning while taking a walk.

“Had they burnt weeds or paper there?”

“I saw nothing which would lead me to believe that they burnt paper,” replied the guard.

“In short,” said the defense, “if weeds were burnt, some one must have carried them there and applied the fire.”

The deposition of the curé of Cinq-Cygne and that of Mademoiselle Goujet made a favorable impression. After vespers, while walking in the forest, they had seen the four noblemen and Michu on horseback, coming from the château toward the forest. The position, the morality of the Abbé Goujet, gave weight to his words.

The speech of the public prosecutor, who felt

confident of obtaining a conviction, was like all addresses of that kind. The accused were incorrigible enemies of France, of the institutions and laws. They had a thirst for disorder. Although they had been implicated in the attempts against the Emperor's life and had made a part of the army of Condé, this magnanimous sovereign had stricken them from the list of the *émigrés*. See the recompense they made for his clemency! In short, he had recourse to all the oratorical declamations which were repeated in the name of the Bourbons against the Bonapartists, which are now repeated against the republicans and legitimists in the name of the younger branch. These commonplaces, which would have a meaning on the part of a fixed government, will appear, at least, comic, when history will find them alike in the mouth of the public prosecutor in every epoch. We can apply to them the words furnished us by former troubles: "The sign is changed, but the wine is always the same!" The public prosecutor, who was, moreover, one of the most distinguished attorneys-general of the Empire, attributed the crime to an intention on the part of the *émigrés* who had returned to protest against the occupation of their estates. He made the audience shudder when he spoke of the senator's position. Then he massed the proofs, the semi-proofs, the probabilities, with a talent which the certain recompense of his zeal stimulated, and quietly took his seat, awaiting the fire of the defense.

Monsieur de Granville had never pleaded any

criminal cause but this, yet it made him a name. First, his address was characterized by that ardent eloquence which we now admire in Berryer. Then he had a conviction of the innocence of the accused, which is one of the most powerful vehicles of speech. Here are the principal points of his defense, given in full by the journals of the time. In the first place, he set forth in its true light Michu's life. It was a fine recital, through which rang the grandest sentiments, and which excited the sympathies of many. On seeing himself rehabilitated by an eloquent voice, there was a moment during which tears flowed from Michu's yellow eyes and ran down his terrible visage. He then appeared what he really was: a man as simple and artful as a child, but a man whose life had but one idea. He was quickly understood, especially by his tears, which produced a great effect upon the jury. The able advocate seized this movement in favor of his client to enter into the discussion of the charges.

"Where is the *corpus delicti*? Where is the senator?" he asked. "You charge us with having shut him up, with having immured him with stone and plaster! But then we alone know where he is, and as you have kept us in prison twenty-three days, he has died for want of food. We are murderers and you have not charged us with murder—But if he lives, we have accomplices; if we had accomplices, if the senator is alive, would we not make him appear? The intentions which you impute to us, having once failed, should we

uselessly aggravate our position? We could obtain pardon by our repentance for vengeance which has been frustrated; and we would persist in detaining a man from whom we can obtain nothing! Is it not absurd? Remove your plaster, it has had no effect," said he to the prosecutor; "for we are either criminal imbeciles, which you do not believe, or innocent victims of circumstances, inexplicable for you as well as for us! You should rather look for the mass of papers which were burnt at the senator's home, and which reveal interests more pressing than our own, and would render you an account of his kidnapping—"

He enlarged upon these hypotheses with marvellous ability. He dwelt upon the morality of the witnesses for the defense, who had a lively religious faith, who believed in a future and eternal punishment. He was sublime in this part and moved the audience profoundly. "Ah, what!" said he, "these criminals are quietly dining, when informed by their cousin of the kidnapping of the senator. When the officer of gendarmerie suggested to them the means of ending the whole matter, they refused to surrender the senator, they did not know what was required of them!" He conveyed the impression of a mysterious affair, the key of which was in the hands of time, which would unveil this unjust prosecution. Once on this ground, he had the audacious and ingenious address to suppose himself a juror, he related his deliberations with his colleagues, he showed how unhappy he would be,

if, having been the cause of cruel convictions, the error happened to be discovered; he depicted so clearly his remorse, and dwelt on the doubts which the counsel's speech would cause him, with so much force, that he left the jury in horrible anxiety.

The jurors had not yet been surfeited with such addresses, they had then the charm of novelty and the jury was shaken: After the ardent speech of Monsieur de Granville, the jurors had to hear the subtle and plausible attorney who multiplied the considerations, set forth all the dark parts of the case and rendered it inexplicable. He applied himself in such a way as to strike the intellect and reason, as Monsieur de Granville had attacked the heart and the imagination. Finally, he succeeded in impressing the jury with a conviction so serious that the prosecutor saw his scaffolding go to pieces. It was so clear that the advocate of the Messieurs d'Hauteserre and Gothard left the matter to the discretion of the jurors on finding the prosecution abandoned as to them. The prosecutor asked the privilege of deferring his reply until the following day. In vain, Bordin, who saw acquittal in the eyes of the jurors if they deliberated immediately after these speeches, objected on the ground of law and fact to a postponement which should prolong for one night even, the anxiety of his innocent clients; the court deliberated.

"The interest of society appears to me to be equal to that of the accused," said the presiding justice. "The court would be wanting in all notions of equity

if it refused a similar request to the defense, it must then accord it to the prosecution."

"Hazard is often the arbiter of our destiny," said Bordin, looking at his clients. "Acquitted to-night, you may be convicted to-morrow."

"At all events," said the elder De Simeuse, "we cannot but admire you."

Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne had tears in her eyes. After the doubts expressed by the counsel for the defense, she did not believe in such success. She was congratulated and all came to assure her of the acquittal of her cousins. But this affair was to be marked by a dramatic incident, the most remarkable, the most sinister, and the most unexpected, that has ever changed the face of a criminal trial!

At five o'clock in the morning, the day after Monsieur de Granville's speech, the senator was found on the main road of Troyes, delighted at being again in the open air. He had been freed from his fetters during his sleep by unknown deliverers. He was going to Troyes, and knew nothing of the trial or of the celebrity of his name throughout Europe. The man who served as the pivot of this drama was as astonished at what they told him as those who found him were to see him. They furnished him a farmer's wagon, and he went rapidly to the prefect's house in Troyes. The prefect informed the director of the jury, the government commissioner and the public prosecutor, who after the statements made to them by the Comte de Gondreville, had Marthe taken from her bed in the house of the Durieus,

while the director of the jury was preparing and issuing a warrant for her arrest. Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, who was at liberty under bail, was also torn from one of those rare moments of sleep which she snatched in the midst of her constant anguish, and was conducted to the prefecture to be interrogated. An order, debarring the accused from any intercourse, even with their counsel, was sent to the warden of the prison. At ten o'clock the assembled crowd learned that the trial was postponed until one o'clock.

This change, which coincided with the news of the senator's deliverance, with Marthe's and Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne's arrest and the interdiction of communication with the accused, carried terror into the House of Chargebœuf. The whole town and the curious, who came to Troyes to witness the trial, the stenographers of the press, the people even, were in a commotion easy to understand. The Abbé Goujet came about ten o'clock to see Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre and the counsel for the defense. They breakfasted as well as they could under such circumstances; the curé took Bordin and Monsieur de Granville aside, revealed to them Marthe's secret, and gave them the fragment of the letter which she had received. The two lawyers exchanged a look, after which Bordin said to the curé:

"Not a word! all appears to us to be lost, let us at least maintain a calm demeanor."

Marthe was not strong enough to withstand the

director of the jury and the public prosecutor united. Moreover, the proofs against her were abundant. At the senator's suggestion, Lechesneau had directed a search to be made for the under-crust of the last loaf of bread brought by Marthe, and which he had left in the cellar, as well as the empty bottles and several other things. During the long hours of his captivity, Malin had made conjectures with respect to his situation, and had looked for indications which might put him on his enemies' tracks; he naturally communicated his observations to the magistrate. Michu's farmhouse, recently built, must have had a new oven, and as the tiles and bricks, on which the bread lay, would leave some imprint of the joints, they might have proof of the preparation of his bread in this oven by taking an impression of the floor, the lines of which might be found on this crust. Then the bottles, sealed with green wax, were without doubt similar to the bottles found in Michu's cellar. These subtle remarks, made to the justice of the peace, who went to make the searches in presence of Marthe, brought about the results foreseen by the senator. Victim of the apparent kindness of Lechesneau, the public prosecutor and the government commissioner, who led her to believe that a complete avowal would alone save her husband's life, at a moment when she was dismayed by undeniable proof, Marthe avowed that the place of concealment was known only to Michu, the De Simeuses and the D'Hautesperres, and that she carried provisions to the senator three times under cover of

the night. Laurence, questioned on the circumstance of the hiding-place, was forced to admit that Michu had discovered it and had pointed it out to her before this affair, as a shelter for the noblemen when they were pursued by the police.

When these examinations were finished, the jury and lawyers were notified that the trial would be resumed. At three o'clock the presiding justice opened the session and announced that the pleadings were to be recommenced with new elements. The presiding justice had three wine bottles shown to Michu and asked him if he recognized them as his own; he called his attention to the fact that the wax on two empty bottles was like that on a full bottle taken from his house in the morning, and in presence of his wife, by the justice of the peace; Michu was indisposed to recognize them as his own; but these new *pièces à conviction* were appreciated by the jurors, who were informed by the presiding justice that the empty bottles had just been found in the place in which the senator had been confined. Each of the accused was questioned about the cellar under the ruins of the monastery. It was shown on a re-examination of all the witnesses for the prosecution and defense, that this lurking-place, discovered by Michu, was known only to him, Laurence and the four noblemen. We can judge of the effect produced on the audience and jurors, when the prosecutor announced that this cellar, which was known only to the accused and two of the witnesses, had served as a prison for the senator.

Marthe was brought in. Her appearance occasioned the deepest anxiety among the audience and the accused. Monsieur de Granville arose to object to a wife's testimony against her husband. The prosecutor remarked that according to her own admission, Marthe was an accomplice in the crime; she would not be required to swear or testify, she was to be heard in the interest of truth only.

"We have, moreover, only to permit the reading of her examination before the director of the jury," said the presiding justice, who ordered the clerk to read the report which was drawn up in the morning.

"Do you confirm this confession?" said the presiding justice.

Michu eyed his wife, and Marthe, who saw her error, fainted completely away. We can say, without exaggeration, that a thunderbolt burst over the accused and their counsel.

"I never wrote to my wife from prison and I know none of its employés," said Michu.

Bordin passed him the fragments of the letter. Michu had only to glance at them.

"My writing has been counterfeited," he exclaimed.

"Denial is your last resource," said the public prosecutor.

They then brought in the senator with the ceremony prescribed for his reception. His entrance was dramatic. Malin, called by the magistrates Comte de Gondreville, without pity for the former owners of that beautiful residence, looked, at the

request of the presiding justice, at the accused with the greatest attention and for a long time. He remembered that the clothing of the kidnappers was exactly like that worn by the noblemen; but he declared that the confusion of his mind at the moment he was carried off, had rendered him unable to affirm that the accused were the guilty persons.

"What is more," said he, "my conviction is that these four noblemen had no part in the affair. The hands which bandaged my eyes in the park were rough. Moreover," said Malin, looking at Michu, "I am disposed to believe that my former manager gave himself that trouble; but I entreat the gentlemen of the jury to weigh well my testimony. My suspicions with regard to that are very slight, and I am not in the least certain. For this reason. The two men who seized me, put me on a horse behind the man who bandaged my eyes, and whose hair was red like that of the prisoner, Michu. However singular my observation may be, I should speak of it, for it makes the base of conviction favorable to the prisoner, whom I pray not to be offended. Tied to the back of an unknown man, I could not escape, notwithstanding the speed of the horse, being affected by his odor. Now, I never knew this as peculiar to Michu. As to the person who, three times, brought me provisions, I am certain that that person is Marthe, the wife of Michu. The first time, I recognized her by a ring which Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne gave her, and which she had not thought of taking off. The

court and gentlemen of the jury will appreciate the contradictions which are encountered in these facts, and which I cannot explain."

Malin's testimony was received with favorable murmurs and unanimous approval. Bordin solicited from the court permission to ask this precious witness a few questions.

"The senator then believes that his confinement is due to other causes than the interests imputed to the accused by the prosecution?"

"Certainly!—" said the senator; "but I am ignorant of the motives, for I declare that during my twenty days of captivity, I saw no one."

"Don't you believe," then said the public prosecutor, "that your château of Gondreville might have contained information, titles or papers, which would have necessitated the search on the part of the Messieurs de Simeuse?"

"I do not think so," said Malin. "I believe these gentlemen incapable, in that case, of obtaining possession of them by violence. They would have had only to ask me for them to obtain them."

"Did not the senator have papers burnt in his park?" said Monsieur de Granville sharply.

The senator looked at Grévin. After having rapidly exchanged a sly glance with the notary which was caught by Bordin, he replied that he had not had any papers burnt. The public prosecutor having asked him for information with respect to the ambush, of which he had almost been the victim in the park, and if he had not been mistaken as to

the position of the gun, the senator said that Michu was at that time watching in a tree. This reply, in accord with Grévin's testimony, produced a lively impression. The noblemen remained impassible during the testimony of their enemy, who overwhelmed them with his generosity. Laurence suffered the most horrible agony; and from moment to moment the Marquis de Chargebœuf took hold of her arm to restrain her. The Comte de Gondreville retired, saluting the four noblemen, who did not return his bow. This little thing made the jurors indignant.

"They are lost!" whispered Bordin to the marquis.

"Alas! always through the pride of their sentiments," replied Monsieur de Chargebœuf.

"Our task has become too easy, messieurs," said the public prosecutor, getting up and looking at the jurors.

He explained the use of the two sacks of plaster by the bedding of the iron pin necessary to hold the padlock which secured the bar that fastened the cellar door, whose description was given in the report made in the morning by Pigoult. He easily proved that the accused alone knew of the existence of the cellar. He set forth the falsehood of the defense, he pulverized all their arguments under the new proofs, so miraculously obtained. In 1806, people were still too near the Supreme Being of 1793 to speak of divine justice; he therefore made no allusion to the jurors of the intervention of

Heaven. In conclusion, he said that justice would have her eye on the unknown accomplices who had released the senator; he then sat down and awaited the verdict with confidence.

The jurors believed in a mystery; but they were all persuaded that this mystery emanated from the accused, whom a private interest of the highest importance kept silent.

Monsieur de Granville, to whom some machination became evident, arose; but he appeared discouraged, more by the manifest conviction of the jury than by the new and unexpected evidence. He perhaps surpassed his speech of the day before. This second speech was certainly more logical and condensed than the first. But he felt his warmth repelled by the coldness of the jury; he spoke without effect and he saw it! A horrible and chilling situation. He showed how far the deliverance of the senator, which had been effected as if by magic, and certainly without the aid of the accused or of Marthe, corroborated his former reasoning. Yesterday the accused could have looked with certainty to an acquittal; and if they were, as the prosecution supposes, able to detain or release the senator, they would have delivered him only after the verdict. He tried to make it understood that enemies, concealed in the background, could alone have dealt this blow.

Strange thing! only the consciences of the prosecutor and the magistrates were disturbed by the remarks of Monsieur de Granville, for the jurors

heard him as a matter of duty. The audience, itself, always so favorable to the accused, was convinced of their guilt. There is an atmosphere of ideas. In a court of justice, the ideas of the crowd weigh upon the judges, upon the jurors, and reciprocally. When he saw this disposition of the minds, which is recognized or felt, the advocate arrived in his closing remarks at a sort of febrile exaltation caused by his conviction.

"In the name of the accused, I pardon you, in advance, a fatal error which nothing will dissipate!" he exclaimed. "We are the plaything of an unknown and Machiavelian power. Marthe Michu is the victim of an odious perfidy and the community will see it when the injury will be irreparable—"

Bordin armed himself with the senator's testimony with a view of demanding the acquittal of the four noblemen.

The presiding justice summed up the case so much the more impartially as the jurors were evidently convinced. He even made the balance incline in favor of the accused by dwelling on the senator's testimony. This graciousness did not compromise the success of the prosecution. At eleven o'clock in the evening, according to the different replies of the foreman of the jury, the court sentenced Michu to be executed, the Messieurs de Simeuse to twenty-four years and the two D'Hautesperres to ten years of compulsory labor; Gothard was acquitted. Every one wished to see the attitude of the five culprits at the supreme

moment when they would be brought unrestrained before the court to hear their sentences. The four noblemen looked at Laurence, who cast on them from a dry eye the glowing look of the martyrs.

"She would weep if we were acquitted," said the younger De Simeuse to his brother.

No prisoners ever faced an unjust sentence with greater serenity or with more dignified bearing than these five victims of a horrible conspiracy.

"Our advocate has forgiven you!" said the elder De Simeuse, addressing himself to the court.

Madame d'Hauteserre fell sick and remained three months in bed at the Marquis de Chargebœuf's house. The good man D'Hauteserre returned quietly to Cinq-Cygne; but consumed by one of those sorrows of the old, who have none of the pleasures of youth to relieve them, he frequently had moments of absence which proved to the curé that this poor father was continually on the morrow of the fatal sentence. They were not required to try Marthe; she died in prison twenty days after her husband's sentence, commending her son to Laurence, in whose arms she expired. The sentence once known, political events of the highest importance suppressed the recollection of this trial, which ceased to be discussed. Society proceeds like the Ocean, it resumes its level, its way after a disaster, and effaces any trace of it by the movement of its devouring interests.

Without her firmness of soul and the conviction of her cousins' innocence, Laurence would have

succumbed, but she gave new proofs of the greatness of her character; she astonished Bordin and Monsieur de Granville by the apparent serenity which is imprinted on noble souls by extreme misfortune. She sat up with and nursed Madame d'Hauteserre, and passed two hours each day at the prison. She said that she would marry one of her cousins, even if they were in the galleys.

"In the galleys!" exclaimed Bordin. "But, mademoiselle, let us think only of obtaining their pardon from the Emperor."

"Their pardon, and from a Bonaparte!" exclaimed Laurence with horror.

The glasses of the worthy old lawyer sprung from his nose; he caught them before they fell and looked at the young girl, who now resembled a woman; he understood that character in its fullest extent; he took the Marquis de Chargebœuf's arm and said to him:

"Monsieur le Marquis, let us hasten to Paris and save them without her!"

The case of Messieurs de Simeuse, d'Hauteserre and Michu was the first to be heard by the court of appeal. The sentence was then fortunately retarded by the ceremonies connected with the installation of the court.

*

Toward the end of the month of September, after three sittings had been taken up by the arguments and by the attorney-general Merlin, who himself addressed the court, the appeal was rejected. The imperial court of Paris was instituted, Monsieur de Granville had been appointed there the attorney-general's deputy, and the department of the Aube being within the jurisdiction of this court, it was possible for him to take steps in the heart of its ministry, in favor of the condemned; he tired out Cambacérès, his patron; Bordin and Monsieur de Chargebœuf repaired on the morning of the day after the sentence to his hotel in the Marais, where they found him passing his honeymoon, for in the interval he had been married. Notwithstanding the events which had occurred during the existence of his former advocate, Monsieur de Chargebœuf saw clearly by the affliction of the young deputy, that he remained faithful to his clients. Certain advocates, the artists of the profession, make mistresses of their causes. The case is rare, do not trust to it. When his former clients and he were alone in his office, Monsieur de Granville said to the marquis:

"I did not expect your visit, I have already exhausted all my influence. Do not try to save Michu; you would not obtain the pardon of the Messieurs de Simeuse. A victim is necessary."

"God bless me!" said Bordin, showing to the young magistrate the three applications for pardon, "can I take upon myself to suppress the petition of your former client? To throw that paper into the fire would be to cut off his head."

He presented Michu's signature in blank; Monsieur de Granville took it and looked at it.

"We cannot suppress it; but remember! if you ask for everything, you will obtain nothing."

"Have we the time to consult Michu?" said Bordin.

"Yes. The death-warrant is a matter which pertains to the attorney-general's office, and we can give you a few days. We kill men," said he, with a sort of bitterness, "but we do it in observing the forms, especially at Paris."

Monsieur de Chargebœuf had already had from the chief-justice information which gave an enormous weight to these sad words of Monsieur de Granville.

"Michu is innocent, I know it, I say it," resumed the magistrate; "but what can we do against them all? And reflect that my rôle is to remain silent at present. It is my duty to have the scaffold erected on which my former client will be decapitated."

Monsieur de Chargebœuf knew Laurence well enough to feel assured that she would not consent to save her cousins at Michu's expense. He made then a last effort. He had requested an audience with the minister of foreign relations with a view of learning if any means of salvation existed in the

high sphere of diplomacy. He took with him Bordin, who knew the minister and had rendered him some service. The two old men found Talleyrand absorbed in the contemplation of his fire, legs stretched out, head resting on his hand, elbow on the table, the journal on the floor. The minister had just read the decision of the court of appeal.

"Please sit down, Monsieur le Marquis," said the minister, "and you, Bordin," he added, indicating a place before him, at his table, "write:

"SIRE,

"Four innocent noblemen, declared guilty by a jury, have just seen their sentence confirmed by your court of appeal.

"Your imperial Majesty cannot refuse to pardon them. These noblemen petition your august clemency, in order to have occasion to utilize their deaths in fighting under your eye and, of Your Majesty, imperial and royal, declare themselves—with respect, the—" etc.

"It's princes only who can thus confer a favor," said the Marquis de Chargebœuf, taking from Bordin's hands this precious minute of the petition to be signed by the four noblemen, which he promised to back with distinguished recommendations.

"The lives of your relatives, Monsieur le Marquis, are committed to the hazard of battle; try to arrive the day after a victory, they will be saved!" said the minister.

He took the pen and wrote a confidential letter to the Emperor, one of ten lines to the Maréchal Duroc; he then rang, asked his secretary for a diplomatic passport, and said quietly to the old lawyer:

"What is your serious opinion about this trial?"

"You do not then know, my lord, who has so completely entangled us?"

"I have my suspicions, but there are reasons why I should be certain," replied the prince. "Return to Troyes, bring me the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne, to-morrow, here, at this hour, but secretly; call on Madame de Talleyrand, whom I will inform of your visit. If Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, who will be placed in such a way as to see the man who will be standing before me, recognize him as the individual who came to her house during the time of the conspiracy of Polignac and De Rivière, whatever I may say, whatever he may reply, not a gesture, not a word! Moreover, do not think of saving any one but the Messieurs de Simeuse and D'Hauteserre, do not embarrass yourself with that scoundrel the gamekeeper."

"A sublime man, my lord!" exclaimed Bordin.

"Enthusiasm! and on your part, Bordin! That man, then, is something. Our sovereign has a prodigious quantity of *amour-propre*, Monsieur le Marquis," said he, changing the conversation. "He is going to dismiss me in order to be able to commit follies without contradiction. He is a great soldier, who can change the laws of space and time; but he cannot change men and he would like to mould them to his use. Now do not forget that the pardon of your relatives will not be obtained, except by one person,—by Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne."

The marquis started alone for Troyes and told

Laurence the state of things. Laurence obtained from the imperial prosecutor permission to see Michu; the marquis accompanied her to the door of the prison, where he awaited her. She came out, her eyes bathed in tears.

"The poor man," said she, "tried to fall at my feet to implore me to think no more of him, without reflecting that he had fetters on his ankles! Ah! marquis, I will plead his cause. Yes, I will go and kiss the Emperor's boot. And, if I fail, well, that man will live eternally in our family through my care. Present his application for pardon in order to gain time, I wish to have his portrait—Let us start."

The next day, when the minister learned by a preconcerted signal that Laurence was at her post, he rang, his usher came and received the order to allow Monsieur Corentin to enter.

"My dear monsieur, you are an able man," said Talleyrand, "and I wish to employ you."

"Monseigneur—"

"Hear me. By serving Fouché you will have money, but never honor or acknowledged position; but by always serving me, as you have just done at Berlin, you will enjoy consideration."

"Monseigneur is very kind—"

"You displayed genius in your last affair at Gondreville—"

"Of what does monseigneur speak?" said Corentin, neither too indifferent nor too astonished.

"Monsieur," dryly replied the minister, "you will be unsuccessful, you fear—"

"What, monseigneur?"

"Death!" said the minister, in his fine, low and deep voice. "My dear monsieur, adieu."

"It's he," said the Marquis de Chargebœuf, entering; "but we have almost killed the countess; she is suffocating!"

"He alone is capable of playing such tricks," replied the minister. "Monsieur, you are in danger of not succeeding," said the prince. "Take ostensibly the route to Strasbourg, I am going to send you duplicate passports in blank. Have doubles, change your route skilfully, and especially your carriage, allow your doubles to be arrested in your stead at Strasbourg, reach Prussia by Switzerland and Bavaria. Not a word and exercise prudence. You have the police against you, and you do not know what the police are! —"

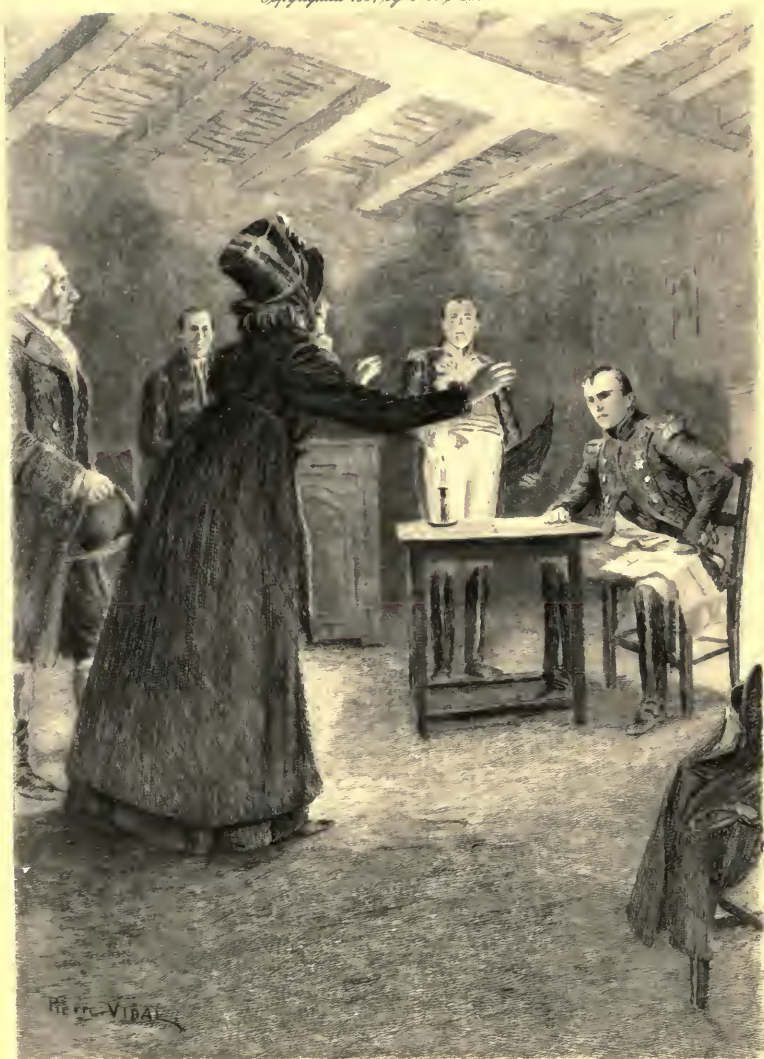
Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne offered Robert Lefebvre a sum sufficient to induce him to come to Troyes and paint Michu's portrait, and Monsieur de Granville promised this painter, then celebrated, every facility possible. Monsieur de Chargebœuf set out in his old berlingot with Laurence and a domestic who spoke German. But near Nancy, he rejoined Gothard and Mademoiselle Goujet, who had preceded them in an excellent carriage; he gave them the berlingot and took their carriage. The minister was right. At Strasbourg the commissary-general of police refused to indorse the travelers' passports, and informed them that his orders were peremptory. At this very time, the marquis and

Laurence were leaving France by way of Besançon with the diplomatic passports. Laurence crossed Switzerland early in the month of October, without according the slightest attention to this magnificent country. She remained at the back of the carriage in the torpor into which the criminal sinks when he knows the hour of his execution. All nature is then covered with a boiling vapor and the most ordinary things assume fantastic shapes. This thought: "If I do not succeed they will commit suicide," fell on her soul, as in punishment by the rack, the bar of the executioner formerly fell upon the culprit's limbs. She felt more and more depressed, she lost all her energy, while awaiting the cruel, decisive and rapidly approaching moment when she would find herself face to face with the man on whom depended the fate of the four noblemen. She had made up her mind to make no effort to overcome her depression in order not to uselessly exhaust her energy. Incapable of understanding this calculation of brave souls, which shows itself in various ways on the exterior, for in these supreme expectations some superior characters abandon themselves to astonishing gayety, the marquis began to fear that Laurence might die before the interview, which was solemn only for them, and certainly surpassed the ordinary proportions of private life. For Laurence to humiliate herself before that man, an object of her hatred and contempt, involved the death of all her generous sentiments.

"After that," said she, "the Laurence who will survive, will no longer resemble her who is going to perish."

Nevertheless, once in Prussia, it was very difficult for the two travelers not to perceive the immense movement of men and things around them. The campaign of Jena had commenced. Laurence and the marquis saw the magnificent divisions of the French army stretching out and parading as if at the Tuileries. In these displays of military splendor, which can be pictured with the expressions and imagery of the Bible only, the man who animated these masses assumed gigantic proportions in Laurence's imagination. Soon shouts of victory resounded in her ears. The imperial army had just gained two important advantages. The Prince of Prussia had been killed on the eve of the day on which the two travelers arrived at Saalfeld, endeavoring to rejoin Napoléon, who was going with the rapidity of lightning. At last, on the thirteenth of October, a date of bad augury, Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne was following a river in the midst of the corps of the grand army, seeing only confusion, sent from one village to another and from division to division, terrified at seeing herself alone with an old man, tossed about on an ocean of a hundred and fifty thousand men, who faced a hundred and fifty thousand others. Tired of always seeing this river beyond the hedges of a muddy road, which she was following over a hill, she asked a soldier its name.

Copyrighted 1897 by G. F. Son.



Copyrighted 1897 by G. S. & Son



"It is the Saale," said he, pointing out to her the Prussian army, grouped in great masses on the other side of the stream.

Night came, Laurence saw fires lighted and arms glittering. The old marquis, whose intrepidity was chivalrous, seated beside his new servant, himself drove two fine horses bought the day before. The old gentleman well knew that he would find neither postilions nor horses when he arrived on the field of battle. Suddenly, the venturesome carriage, an object of astonishment for all the soldiers, was stopped by a gendarme of the gendarmerie of the army, who rode up to the marquis at full speed, shouting:

"Who are you? where are you going? whom do you wish to see?"

"The Emperor," said the Marquis de Chargebœuf; "I have an important dispatch from the ministers for the Grand Maréchal Duroc."

"Well," said the gendarme, "you cannot remain here."

Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne and the marquis were so much the more obliged to remain there as the daylight was about to cease.

"Where are we?" said Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, stopping two officers whom she saw coming, and whose uniforms were concealed by cloth overcoats.

"You are in advance of the vanguard of the French army, madame," replied one of the two officers. "You cannot remain here, for if the enemy

made a movement and the artillery should open, you would be between two fires."

"Ah!" said she with an indifferent air.

Upon that *ah!* the other officer said:

"How did that woman get here?"

"We are waiting," she replied, "for a gendarme who has gone to notify Monsieur Duroc, in whom we shall find a protector through whose solicitation we may speak to the Emperor."

"Speak to the Emperor?" said the first officer—"Do you think of it on the eve of a decisive battle?"

"Ah! you are right, I must not speak to him until after to-morrow, victory will make him kind."

The two officers removed to the distance of twenty paces, astride of their motionless horses. The carriage was then surrounded by a squadron of generals, marshals, and officers, all in extremely brilliant uniforms, who respected the carriage precisely because it was there.

"*Mon Dieu!*" said the marquis to Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, "I am afraid that we have spoken to the Emperor."

"The Emperor?" said a general of cavalry, "why there he is!"

Laurence then saw a few paces in advance, and alone, that officer who had exclaimed: "How did that woman get here?" One of the two officers, the Emperor, in fact, wearing his celebrated great-coat over a green uniform, was on a white horse, richly caparisoned. He was examining with a

field-glass the Prussian army on the other side of the Saale. Laurence then understood why the carriage remained there, and why the Emperor's escort respected it. She was seized with a convulsive movement, the hour had arrived. She then heard the rumbling noise of several bodies of men and of their arms, establishing themselves at quick-step on the plateau. The batteries seemed to possess a language, the caissons sounded and the brass sparkled.

"Maréchal Lannes will take a position with his whole corps in advance. Maréchal Lefebvre and the Guard will occupy that summit," said the other officer, who was Major-General Berthier.

The Emperor dismounted. At the first movement he made, Roustan, his famous Mameluke, hastened to hold his horse. Laurence was stupefied with astonishment, she did not believe in so much simplicity.

"I shall pass the night on this plateau," said the Emperor.

At this moment the Grand Maréchal Duroc, whom the gendarme had found, came to the Marquis de Chargebœuf and asked him the cause of his coming; the marquis replied that a letter written by the minister of foreign affairs would inform him how urgent it was that Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne and himself should obtain an interview with the Emperor.

"His Majesty is going to dine without doubt at his bivouac," said Duroc, taking the letter, "and when

I have seen its object, I will let you know if it can be accomplished. Corporal," said he to the gendarme, "accompany this carriage and lead it back to the cottage."

Monsieur de Chargebœuf followed the gendarme and stopped his carriage behind a miserable hut, built of wood and earth, surrounded by fruit trees and guarded by pickets of infantry and cavalry.

We may say that the majesty of war shone there in all its splendor. From this summit, the lines of both armies could be seen in the moonlight. After an hour of waiting, occupied by the perpetual movement of the aides de camp going and coming, Duroc, who came to look for Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne and the Marquis de Chargebœuf, took them into the cottage, the floor of which was of earth, beaten down like that of our threshing-floors. Before a table, from which the cloth had been removed and in front of a fire of green wood which smoked, Napoléon was seated on a rude chair. His boots, covered with mud, attested his rides through the fields. He had taken off his famous overcoat, and then his celebrated green uniform, crossed by his *grand cordon rouge*, heightened by the white of his cassimere breeches and vest, set off admirably well his pale, stern and imperial face. He had his hand on an open map, placed on his knee. Berthier was standing in his brilliant costume of Vice-Constable of the Empire. Constant, the valet, was handing the Emperor his coffee on a salver.

"What do you wish?" said he, with a feigned

abruptness and a glance of the eye which seemed to penetrate Laurence's brain. "You are no longer afraid to speak to me before the battle? Why are you here?"

"Sire," said she, looking at him with an eye not less fixed, "I am Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne."

"Well?" he replied in an angry voice, believing himself braved by that look.

"You do not understand, then? I am the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne, and I implore your mercy," said she, falling on her knees and extending him the petition drawn up by Talleyrand and bearing the recommendations of the Empress, of Cambacérès and Malin.

The Emperor graciously raised the suppliant, giving her a sharp look and said:

"Will you be discreet at last? Do you understand what the French Empire should be?"

"Ah! at this moment, I understand the Emperor only," said she, subdued by the kindness with which the man of destiny had spoken these words, which gave assurance of a pardon.

"Are they innocent?" asked the Emperor.

"All!" said she, enthusiastically.

"All? No, the game-keeper is a dangerous man, who would kill my senator without taking your advice."

"Oh! sire," said she, "if you had a friend who had devoted his life to you, would you abandon him? would you not—?"

"You are a woman," said he, with a tinge of raillery.

"And you, a man of iron!" said she with passionate severity which pleased him.

"That man has been found guilty by the courts of the country," he replied.

"But he is innocent."

"Child!—" said he.

He took *Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne* by the hand and led her out on the plateau.

"Behold," said he, with an eloquence peculiar to him, which made the cowardly brave, "behold three hundred thousand men, they are innocent, they also! Well, to-morrow, thirty thousand men will die for their country! The Prussians have among them, perhaps, a great mechanician, an ideologist, a genius, who will be mowed down. On our side, we shall lose great men who are unknown. In a word, I shall, perhaps, see my best friend die. Shall I accuse God? No, I will remain silent. Understand, *mademoiselle*, that men must die for the laws of their country as they die here for its glory," he added, leading her back to the cabin. "Go, return to France," said he, looking at the *marquis*, "my orders will follow you there."

Laurence believed that *Michu's* sentence would be commuted and, in the effusion of her gratitude, she embraced the knees and kissed the hand of the Emperor.

"You are *Monsieur de Chargebœuf*?" *Napoléon* then said on seeing the *marquis*.

"Yes, sire."

"You have children?"

"Several."

"Why should you not give me one of your grandsons? he would be one of my pages—"

"Ah! there is the sub-lieutenant coming out," thought Laurence, "he wants to be paid for his pardon."

The marquis bowed without replying. Opportunely, General Rapp rushed into the cabin.

"Sire, the cavalry of the Guard and that of the Grand Duc de Berg will not be able to make a junction before to-morrow at mid-day."

"It matters not," said Napoléon, turning toward Berthier; "they are hours of grace for us also; let us know how to profit by them."

At a motion of the hand, the marquis and Laurence retired and entered their carriage. The corporal put them on their route and conducted them to a village where they passed the night. The following day, they both left the field of battle amid the noise of eight hundred pieces of artillery which roared for ten hours, and, on the way, they learned of the astonishing victory of Jena. Eight days after, they entered the suburbs of Troyes. An order of the chief-justice to the imperial prosecutor of the tribunal of first instance of Troyes, directed the release of the noblemen under bail, while awaiting the decision of the Emperor and King; but, at the same time, the order for Michu's execution was forwarded from the attorney-general's office. These

orders had arrived the same morning. Laurence went to the prison at two o'clock in traveling attire. She obtained permission to remain with Michu, for whom they were performing the sad ceremony called the *toilette*. The good Abbé Goujet, who had asked the privilege of accompanying him to the scaffold, had just given absolution to that man, who was distressed because he was to die in uncertainty as to the fate of his masters; so when Laurence showed herself, he uttered a cry of joy.

"I can die!" said he.

"They are pardoned, I do not know on what conditions," she replied, "but they are; and I have made every effort for you, my friend, notwithstanding their advice. I thought I had saved you, but the Emperor deceived me by his sovereign graciousness."

"It was written on high," said Michu, "that the watch-dog was to be killed on the same spot as his old masters."

The last hour passed rapidly. Michu, at the moment of parting, did not venture to ask any favor other than to kiss Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne's hand, but she offered him her cheek and allowed herself to be reverently kissed by this noble victim. Michu refused to get into the cart.

"The innocent should go on foot!" said he.

He did not wish to take the Abbé Goujet's arm, he walked with dignity and firmness to the scaffold. When about to place himself on the plank, he said to the executioner, while requesting him to pull down his coat, which had slipped over his neck:

"My coat belongs to you, try not to cut it."

The four noblemen had scarcely time to see Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne; an orderly of the general, commanding the military division, brought them sub-lieutenants' commissions in the same regiment of cavalry, with an order to repair immediately to Bayonne, the dépôt of their corps. After heart-rending farewells, for they all had a presentiment of the future, Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne entered her deserted château.

The two brothers, already majors, died together, one defending the other, under the eye of the Emperor, at Sommo-Sierra. Their last word was: "Laurence, *cy meurs!*"

The elder D'Hautesserre died a colonel in the attack on the redoubt of Moskova, where his brother took his place.

Adrien was made general of brigade at the battle of Dresden, where he was seriously wounded, and was enabled to return to Cinq-Cygne for treatment. While trying to save this remnant of the four noblemen, whom she had for a moment seen around her, the countess, then thirty-two years old, married him; but she offered him a blighted heart, which he accepted: people who love, hesitate at nothing or hesitate at everything.

The Restoration found Laurence without enthusiasm, the Bourbons came too late for her: nevertheless, she had no occasion to complain: her husband, made peer of France, with the title of Marquis de Cinq-Cygne, became lieutenant-general

in 1816, and was rewarded with the *cordon bleu* for the eminent services which he rendered at that time.

Michu's son, for whom Laurence cared as if he had been her own child, became an advocate in 1817. After having practised his profession for two years, he was made associate judge of the tribunal of Alençon and afterward became the King's attorney in the tribunal of Arcis, in 1827.* Laurence, who had invested Michu's money, remitted to this young man on the day of his majority; securities which yielded him an annual income of twelve thousand francs; later, through her influence, he married the wealthy Mademoiselle Girel of Troyes. The Marquis de Cinq-Cygne died in 1829, in the arms of Laurence, his father, his mother and his children who adored him. At the time of his death, no one had yet penetrated the secret of the senator's kidnapping. Louis XVIII. did not refuse to make reparation for the injuries resulting from that affair; but he was mute as to the causes of that disaster with the Marquise de Cinq-Cygne, who then believed him accessory to the catastrophe.

*The dates here given are as quoted in the French text. In Cerfberr and Christophe's *Répertoire de la Comédie Humaine*, it is stated that Michu's son was admitted to the bar in 1817 and practised for two years, passing thence to the magistracy; that he was associate judge at Alençon in 1824, after which he was appointed *procureur du roi* at Arcis.

The date of this latter appointment is therefore probably correctly stated in the text as 1827. (Publisher's Note.)

CONCLUSION

*

The late Marquis de Cinq-Cygne had employed his savings, as well as his father's and mother's, in the purchase of a magnificent house, situated on the Rue du Faubourg-du-Roule, and included in the considerable majorat established for the support of his peerage. The sordid economy of the marquis and of his parents, which often afflicted Laurence, was then explained. Moreover, since that purchase, the marquise, who lived on her estate, and saved for her children, passed her winters much more willingly at Paris, as her daughter Berthe and her son Paul were approaching an age when their education demanded the advantages of Paris. Madame de Cinq-Cygne went little into society. Her husband could not be ignorant of the regrets which dwelt in the heart of this woman, but he showed her the greatest tenderness and died, having loved only her in the world. This noble heart, unappreciated for a time, but which the generous daughter of the Cinq-Cygnés requited in later years with as much affection as she received, this husband was, at last, completely happy. Laurence's life was above all influenced by the happiness of her family. No woman in Paris was more cherished or respected by her friends. To visit her house is an

honor. Mild, indulgent, intellectual, artless above all, she pleases and attracts choice souls, notwithstanding her attitude tinged with sorrow. Every one seems to protect this courageous woman, and this feeling of secret protection explains, moreover, the attraction of her friendship. Her life, so sorrowful in her youth, is beautiful and serene toward the evening. Her sufferings are known to all. No one ever asked who was the original of the portrait painted by Robert Lefebvre, which, since the death of the guard, is the principal and mournful ornament of the salon. Laurence's physiognomy has the maturity of fruit grown with difficulty. A sort of religious pride graces to-day that brow on which sorrow has left its trace. When Laurence took charge of her house, her fortune, augmented by the law with respect to indemnities, yielded an annual income of two hundred thousand francs, without counting her husband's emoluments. Laurence had inherited eleven hundred thousand francs, left her by the De Simeuses. From that time she expended a hundred thousand francs a year, and put aside the rest for Berthe's marriage dower.

Berthe is the living likeness of her mother, but without martial spirit; she is her mother, refined, *spirituelle* "and more of a woman," said Laurence in a melancholy tone. The marquise did not wish her daughter to marry before she was twenty. The savings of the family, wisely managed by the venerable D'Hautesserre and invested in government

securities, when the price fell in 1830, gave Berthe, who in 1833 was twenty years old, a dowry which yielded eighty thousand francs a year.

About that time the Princesse de Cadignan wished to marry her son, the Duc de Maufrigneuse, and a few months before had arranged with the Marquise de Cinq-Cygne that he should wed the latter's daughter. Georges de Maufrigneuse dined three times a week with the marquise and Berthe, he accompanied them to the Italiens, he caracoled around their carriage in the Bois during their drives there. It was then evident to every one in the Faubourg Saint-Germain that Georges loved Berthe. But no one was able to learn if Madame de Cinq-Cygne had a desire to make her daughter a duchess, in expectation of her becoming a princess; or if the princess desired for her son so rich a dowry, if the celebrated Diana made advances to the provincial nobility, or if the provincial nobility was alarmed at Madame de Cadignan's celebrity, tastes, and ruinous way of living. Not desiring to injure her son, the princess, having become devout, secluded herself and was passing the summer at Geneva in a villa.

One evening, Madame la Princesse de Cadignan had at her house the Marquise d'Espard and De Marsay, the President of the Council. That evening she saw her former admirer for the last time, as he died the following year. Rastignac, Assistant Secretary of State, attached to the De Marsay ministry, two ambassadors, two celebrated orators of the Chamber of Peers, the old Ducs de Lenoncourt

and De Navarreins, the Comte de Vandenesse and his young wife, and D'Arthez were there and formed quite an extraordinary assemblage, whose composition will be easily explained: the question was to obtain from the prime minister a safe-conduct for the Prince de Cadignan. De Marsay, who did not wish to assume that responsibility, came to say that the matter was in good hands. An old politician was to bring them a decision during the evening. The Marquise and Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne were announced. Laurence, whose principles were uncompromising, was not surprised but shocked to see the most illustrious representatives of legitimacy of both chambers conversing with the prime minister of him whom she always called Monseigneur le Duc d'Orléans, listening to and laughing with him. De Marsay, like a lamp about to go out, shone with expiring brilliancy. He willingly forgot there the cares of public affairs. The Marquise de Cinq-Cygne accepted De Marsay as the Austrian Court accepted, at that time, Monsieur de Saint-Aulaire: the man of the world had the minister received. But she sprang up as if her chair had been of red-hot iron, when she heard the Comte de Gondreville announced. "Adieu, madame," said she to the princess, coolly.

She withdrew with Berthe, calculating the direction of her steps in order to avoid meeting that fatal man.

"You have perhaps prevented Georges' marriage," the princess said in a low voice to De Marsay.

The former clerk of Arcis, the former representative of the people, the former Thermidorien, the former tribune of the people, the former Councillor of State, the former count of the Empire and senator, the former peer of Louis XVIII., the new peer of July, made a servile bow to the Princesse de Cadignan.

"Tremble no more, fair lady, we are not making war on princes," said he, taking a seat near her.

Malin had had the esteem of Louis XVIII., to whom his long experience was not unprofitable. He had greatly aided in overthrowing Decazes and had ably advised the Villèle ministry. Received coldly by Charles X., he had espoused Talleyrand's inveterate enmities. He was then in great favor with the twelfth government which he had the advantage of having served since 1789, and which he will, without doubt, injure; but fifteen months before, he had broken the friendship which for thirty-six years had united him to the most celebrated of our diplomats. It was during this evening, while speaking of this great diplomat, that he uttered these words:

"Do you know the reason of his hostility to the Duc de Bordeaux?—the pretender is too young—"

"You are giving in that," replied Rastignac, "singular advice to young people."

De Marsay, having become very thoughtful after the remarks of the princess, took no notice of these pleasantries; he was slyly observing Gondreville, and before making any remarks, evidently awaited

the departure of the old man, who went to bed early. All those who were there and witnessed the withdrawal of Madame De Cinq-Cygne, whose reasons were known, followed De Marsay's silence. Gondreville, who had not recognized the marquise, was ignorant of the motives of this general reserve; but the habit of engaging in public affairs and his political training gave him tact; he was, moreover, a man of discernment; he believed that his presence was annoying, he retired. De Marsay, standing by the fireplace, contemplated, in a way suggestive of serious thought, this old man of seventy who walked out slowly.

"I was wrong, madame, in not having named to you my negotiator," said the prime minister on hearing the roll of the carriage. "But I am going to redeem my fault and give you the means of making your peace with the Cinq-Cygnés. It is now more than thirty years since the affair occurred, it is as old as the death of Henry IV., which, between us, notwithstanding the proverb, is certainly a history of which we have not the least knowledge, like many other historical catastrophes. I swear to you, moreover, that if that affair did not concern the marquise, it would be no less curious. In fine, it throws light on a famous passage of our modern annals, that of Mount Saint-Bernard. Messieurs the ambassadors will there see that in point of depth our politicians of to-day are very far from the Machiavels whom the popular waves elevated in 1793 above the tempests, some of whom *found*, as the romance

says, *a port*. To be somebody in France to-day, it is necessary to have passed through the storms of that time."

"But under that aspect, it seems to me," said the princess, smiling, "that your state of things has nothing desirable—"

A well-bred smile played upon the lips of all, and even De Marsay could not refrain from joining. The ambassadors appeared impatient, De Marsay was taken with a fit of coughing, and the company remained silent.

"During a night of June in 1800," said the prime minister, "toward three o'clock in the morning, at the moment when the candles were paling before the light of day, two men tired of playing bouillotte, or who played only to occupy the others, quit the salon of the palace of foreign affairs, at that time situated on the Rue du Bac, and went into a private room. These two men, one of whom is dead, and the other has *one* foot in the grave, are, each in his way, equally extraordinary. Both were priests and both abjured the priesthood; both married. One had been a plain oratorian, the other had worn the episcopal mitre. The name of the first was Fouché, I shall not mention the name of the second; both were simple French citizens, but not very simple. When they were seen going into a private room, the persons who were still there manifested some curiosity. A third person followed them. As to this last man, who believed himself much stronger than the first two, his name was Sieyès, and you all

know that he too belonged to the Church before the Revolution. He who walked with difficulty was, at that time, minister of foreign affairs, Fouché was minister of the general police. Sieyès had abdicated the consulship. A little man, cold and severe, left his place and joined these three men, saying in a loud voice, before a person from whom I get the expression: 'I fear the *brelan* of the priests.' He was minister of war. Carnot's remark did not disturb the two consuls, who were playing in the salon. Cambacérès and Lebrun were then at the mercy of their ministers, who were infinitely stronger than they. Almost all of these statesmen are dead. We no longer owe them anything; they belong to history, and the history of that night was terrible. I tell it to you, because it is known only to me, because Louis XVIII. has not told it to poor Madame de Cinq-Cygne, and because it is indifferent to the present government if she knows it. All four sat down. The lame man closed the door before a word was said, it is said that he even pushed the bolt. Only well tried persons show these little attentions. The faces of the priests were sallow and impassible, as you know. Only Carnot had a ruddy complexion. Moreover, the military man spoke first.

"'What is the question?'"

"'France,' the prince must have said. He is a man whom I admire as one of the most extraordinary men of our time.

"'The Republic,' Fouché certainly said.

“‘Power,’ Sieyès probably said.

Those present looked at each other. De Marsay had with voice, look and gesture, admirably portrayed the three men.

“‘The three priests understood each other marvelously well,’” he resumed. “‘Carnot, without doubt, looked at his colleagues and the ex-consul with rather a dignified air. I believe that he must have been inwardly astounded.

“‘Do you expect success?’ Sieyès asked him.

“‘We can expect everything from Bonaparte,’” replied the minister of war, ‘he has crossed the Alps successfully.’

“‘At this moment,’” said the diplomat cautiously, ‘he is staking his all.’

“‘After all, let us come to the point,’” said Fouché, ‘what shall we do if the first consul be defeated? Is it possible to create a new army? Shall we remain his humble servants?’

“‘There is no Republic now,’” observed Sieyès, ‘he is consul for ten years.’

“‘He has more power than Cromwell had,’” added the bishop, ‘and he did not vote the death of the king.’

“‘We have a master,’” said Fouché; ‘shall we support him if he lose the battle or shall we return to the pure republic?’

“‘France,’” replied Carnot, sententiously, ‘will be able to resist only by returning to the energy of the Convention.’

“‘I am of Carnot’s opinion,’” said Sieyès. ‘If

Bonaparte return defeated, it will be necessary to finish him: he has said too much to us for the last seven months.'

" 'He has the army,' replied Carnot with a thoughtful air.

" 'We shall have the people!' exclaimed Fouché.

" 'You are hasty, monsieur!' replied the great lord in that base voice which he retained, and which silenced the former oratorian.

" 'Be frank,' said a former member of the Convention, showing his head, 'if Bonaparte be victorious, we shall worship him; defeated, we shall bury him.'

" 'You have hit it, Malin,' said the master of the house, without being disconcerted, 'you will be one of us.'

" 'He motioned to him to sit down. It was to this circumstance that this personage, quite an obscure member of the Convention, is indebted for what he is to-day. Malin was discreet and the two ministers were true to him; but he was also the pivot of the machine and the soul of the plot.

" 'This man has not yet been defeated!' exclaimed Carnot, with an accent of conviction, 'and has just surpassed Hannibal.'

" 'In case of disaster, here is the Directory,' shrewdly replied Sieyès, calling attention to the fact that they were five.

" 'And,' said the minister of foreign affairs, 'we are all interested in the maintenance of the French Revolution, we have all three discarded the frock;

the general has voted the death of the king. As to you,' said he to Malin, 'you have some of the estates of the *émigrés*.'

" 'We have all the same interests,' peremptorily said Sieyès, 'and our interests are in accord with those of the country.'

" 'A rare thing!' said the diplomat, smiling.

" 'We must act,' added Fouché; 'the battle is being fought, and Mèlas has superior forces. Genoa is surrendered, and Masséna has committed the fault of embarking for Antibes: it is then not certain that he can join Bonaparte, who will be reduced to his own resources.'

" 'Who gave you that news?' asked Carnot.

" 'It is true,' replied Fouché. 'You will have the courier at the opening of the Bourse.'

" 'These men did not stand upon ceremony,'" said De Marsay, smiling and stopping for a moment.

" 'Now it is not when the news of the disaster has arrived,' continued Fouché, 'that we shall be able to organize clubs, awaken patriotism and change the constitution. Our 18th Brumaire ought to be ready.'

" 'Let it be done by the minister of police,' said the diplomat, 'and let us place no confidence in Lucien Bonaparte.'—Lucien Bonaparte was then minister of the interior.

" 'I will certainly arrest him,' said Fouché.

" 'Messieurs,' exclaimed Sieyès, 'our Directory will no longer be submitted to anarchic changes. We will organize an oligarchic power, a Senate for

life, an elective Chamber, which will be in our hands;—for let us learn to profit by the mistakes of the past.’

“ ‘With that system, I shall have peace,’ said the bishop.

“ ‘Find me a reliable man to correspond with Moreau, for the army of Germany will become our only resource!’ exclaimed Carnot, who had remained plunged in profound meditation.

“ ‘In fact,” said De Marsay after a pause, “these men were right, messieurs! They were grand in that crisis, and I would have done as they did.

“ ‘Messieurs!’ ” De Marsay said in resuming his recital, “exclaimed Sieyès in a grave and solemn tone.

“ ‘This word *messieurs!* was perfectly understood: every look expressed the same faith, the same promise, that of absolute silence, of a complete solidarity in case Bonaparte should return victorious.

“ ‘We all know what we are to do,’ added Fouché.

“ ‘Sieyès had very softly drawn the bolt, his priest’s ear had served him well. Lucien entered.

“ ‘Good news, messieurs! a courier brings Madame Bonaparte a message from the First Consul: he has commenced by a victory at Montebello.’

“ ‘The three ministers looked at each other.

“ ‘Is it a general engagement?’ asked Carnot.

“ ‘No, a battle in which Lannes covered himself with glory. It was a bloody affair. With ten thousand men he was attacked by eighteen thousand, and was saved by a division sent to his aid.

Ott is fleeing. At last, Mélas's line of operations is cut.'

" 'When did the battle take place?' asked Carnot.

" 'The eighth,' said Lucien.

" 'It is now the 13th,' replied the well-informed minister; 'well, according to appearances, the destiny of France is now at stake.—The battle of Marengo commenced in fact on the fourteenth of June at daybreak.'

" 'Four days of mortal suspense!' said Lucien.

" 'Mortal?' replied the minister of foreign affairs, calmly and with an interrogatory air.

" 'Four days,' said Fouché.

" 'An eye-witness has assured me that the two consuls learned these details only at the moment when the six personages re-entered the salon. It was then four o'clock in the morning. Fouché was the first to leave. Here is what this tenebrous, profound, extraordinary and little known genius did with an infernal and clandestine activity, but who certainly had a genius equal to that of Philippe II., of Tiberius and of Borgia. His conduct at the time of the affair of Walcheren was that of a consummate soldier, a great politician and a far-sighted administrator. He is the only minister whom Napoléon has had. You know that he, at that time, alarmed Napoléon. Fouché, Masséna and the Prince are the three greatest men, the ablest minds in diplomacy, war and government, that I know; if Napoléon had frankly associated them in his work, there would be no longer any Europe, but a vast French

Empire. Fouché did not break with Napoléon until he saw Sieyès and the Prince de Talleyrand cast aside. In the space of three days, Fouché, while concealing the hand which stirred up the embers of that fire, organized that general anguish which oppressed all France and revived the republican energy of 1793.

"As it is necessary to clear up this obscure corner of our history, I shall say to you that this agitation caused by him who held all the strings of the former Montagne, brought forth the republican plots by which the life of the First Consul was menaced after his victory at Marengo. It was the consciousness which he had of the wrong of which he was the author, that gave him the strength to point out to Napoléon, notwithstanding his opinion to the contrary, the republicans as more identified with those attempts than the royalists. Fouché had a wonderful knowledge of men; he counted on Sieyès because of his disappointed ambition, on Talleyrand because he was a great lord, on Carnot because he was profoundly honest; but he feared our man of that evening, and here is how he circumvented him. He was only Malin at that time, Malin the correspondent of Louis XVIII. He was forced by the minister of police to prepare the proclamations of the revolutionary government, its acts, its decrees, the outlawry of the factionists of the 18th Brumaire; and, much more, it was this accomplice who, against his will, had the required number of copies printed, which were tied in bundles, and

held in readiness in his house. The printer was arrested as a conspirator, for he chose a revolutionary printer, and the police held him a prisoner for two months. This man died in 1816, believing in a Montagnard conspiracy. One of the most remarkable acts performed by Fouché's police is unquestionably that which was occasioned by the first courier, received by the most celebrated banker of that time, and who announced the loss of the battle of Marengo. Fortune, if you recall it, did not declare for Napoléon until seven o'clock in the evening. At mid-day, the agent sent to the theatre of war by the then king of finance regarded the French army as annihilated, and hastened to dispatch a courier. The minister of police sent for the bill-stickers and criers; one of his trusty friends arrived with a cart loaded with printed matter, when the evening courier, who had traveled very rapidly, spread the news of the triumph which threw France into the wildest excitement. There were considerable losses on the Bourse. But the assembled bill-stickers and criers, who were to proclaim the outlawry, the political death of Bonaparte, were held in check, and waited until the proclamation and the placard in which the victory of the First Consul was extolled, were printed. Malin, on whom the whole responsibility of the plot would have fallen, was so frightened that he put the bundles in carts and conveyed them at night to Gondreville, where, without doubt, he buried these sinister papers in the cellars of the

château, which he had purchased under the name of a man,—he had him appointed president of an imperial court—his name was—Marion. Then he returned to Paris in time to compliment the First Consul. Napoléon came, you know, from Italy into France with terrible speed, after the battle of Marengo; but it is certain for those who know thoroughly the secret history of that time, that his promptitude was occasioned by a message from Lucien. The minister of the interior had caught a glimpse of the attitude of the Montagnard party, and, without knowing from what quarter the wind was blowing, he feared the storm. Incapable of suspecting the three ministers, he attributed this movement to the enmities excited by his brother on the 18th Brumaire, and to a firm belief, at that time, of the remnant of the men of 1793, that the army had suffered an irreparable check in Italy. The words: ‘Death to the tyrant!’ shouted at Saint-Cloud, resounded incessantly in Lucien’s ears. The battle of Marengo detained Napoléon on the fields of Lombardy until the twenty-fifth of June, he arrived in France on the second of July. Now, imagine the faces of the five conspirators at the Tuileries congratulating the First Consul on his victory. Fouché, in the very same salon, told the tribune, for this Malin whom you have just seen has been something of a tribune, to wait longer, and that all was not ended. In fact, Bonaparte did not appear to Monsieur de Talleyrand and Fouché as wedded as they themselves were to the

Revolution, and they buckled him to it for their own safety by the affair of the Duc d'Enghien. The execution of the prince is connected, by tangible ramifications, with what was plotted in the palace of foreign affairs during the campaign of Marengo. In fact, for him who has known well-informed persons, it is now clear that Bonaparte was handled like a child by Monsieur de Talleyrand and Fouché, who wished to embroil him with the House of Bourbon, whose ambassadors were then making advances to the First Consul.

“ ‘Talleyrand, who was playing whist at the house of Madame de Luynes,’ said at the time one of the personages who were listening, ‘at three o’clock in the morning, pulls out his watch, interrupts the game and suddenly asks his three partners without any transition, if the Prince of Condé had any other child besides the Duc d’Enghien. A question so absurd, coming from Monsieur de Talleyrand, caused the greatest surprise.’

“ ‘Why do you ask what you know so well?’ they said to him.

“ ‘It is to inform you that the House of Condé ends at this moment.’

“Now, Monsieur de Talleyrand was at the house of Madame de Luynes from the commencement of the evening, and knew, without doubt, that it was impossible for Bonaparte to grant a pardon.”

“But,” said Rastignac to De Marsay, “I do not see Madame de Cinq-Cygne in all this.”

“Ah! you were so young, my dear monsieur,

that I forgot the conclusion. You know the affair of the kidnapping of the Comte de Gondreville, which was the cause of the deaths of the two Simeuses and of the elder brother of D'Hautesserre, who by his marriage with Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, became Count and, since, Marquis de Cinq-Cygne—"

De Marsay, requested by several persons to whom that adventure was unknown, gave an account of the trial, saying that the five unknown men were five daring fellows of the general police of the Empire, who were ordered to destroy the bundles of printed matter which the Comte de Gondreville had just burnt, believing the Empire established.

"I suspect Fouché," said he, "of having, at the same time, ordered a search for proofs of the correspondence of Gondreville and Louis XVIII., with whom he always had an understanding, even during the Terror. But in that terrible affair, there was passion on the part of the principal agent, who still lives, one of those great subordinates who are never replaced, and who has made himself remarkable by astonishing acts of vigor and courage. It appears that Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne had maltreated him when he came to arrest the Simeuses. So, madame, you have the secret of the affair; you will be able to explain it to the Marquise de Cinq-Cygne and make her understand why Louis XVIII. remained silent."

Paris, January, 1841.

LIST OF ETCHINGS

VOLUME XXXIV

	PAGE
THE ASSIZE OF TROYES	<i>Fronts.</i>
A PASSION IN THE DESERT	16
THE MIDNIGHT MASS	48
THE PAVILION OF CINQ-CYGNE	88
AT THE CHÂTEAU OF CINQ-CYGNE	128
THE SANDAL-WOOD BOX	192
ON THE ROAD TO TROYES	216
MLLE. DE CINQ-CYGNE TO NAPOLÉON	344

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY, LOS ANGELES

COLLEGE LIBRARY

This book is due on the last date stamped below.

Nov 22 63

Dec 2 63

Dec 9 63

Jan 5 64

NOV 23 74

REC'D COL LIB.

OCT 5 1974

Book Slip-25m-9,'60 (B2936s4) 4280

THE LIBRARY

Library
PQ
2161
B27
v. 34

UCLA-College Library
PQ 2161 B27 v.34



L 005 656 449 5

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A 001 136 354 6

